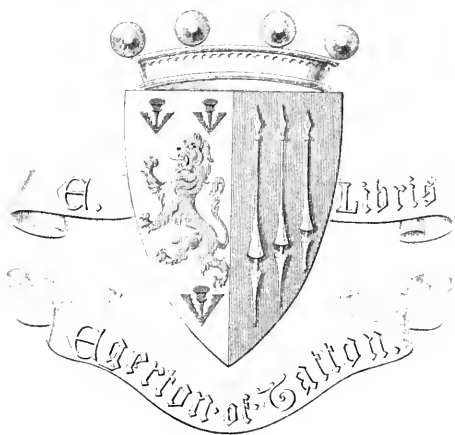


FONQUILLE

OR

The Swiss Smuggler





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LONDON: PERCIVAL AND CO.

JONQUILLE

OR

THE SWISS SMUGGLER

TRANSLATED FROM
THE FRENCH OF T. COMBE

BY

BEATRIX L. TOLLEMACHE
(HON. MRS. LIONEL TOLLEMACHE)

London

PERCIVAL AND CO.

1891

PREFATORY LINES BY THE TRANSLATOR

YES, all the world's a cage,
And we the birds. Some spread their wings
For lofty flight—'tis they who rage
Against the bars ; another sings,
 Contented with his lot,
 Ne'er knew, or has forgot,
The leafy woods and buoyant air ;
His gilded cage is spacious, fair ;
He never beats against the wires,
He has no wilful wild desires.—
The world's a cage he has not found
Too narrow—for his wings are bound.

B. L. T.

CHAPTER I

MANUEL had the great misfortune to be apprenticed to a trade which he thoroughly disliked. He lived in one of those Swiss villages in the Jura which have grown prosperous through watchmaking, and his father was determined that his boy should follow his own trade of watchmaker. This calling was handed down from father to son like a heritage, and each generation was expected to follow in the same groove. There might seem to be some advantages in this plan; certain special aptitudes and manual skill become hereditary, but all individuality is checked, any original powers are liable to be crushed by this routine which grinds down particular tastes, and many lives are thus thwarted and stunted.

Manuel's impetuous nature rebelled against

the restraints put upon him ; he was a lively boy with vigorous muscles, and he could not submit calmly to a sedentary life. He was fourteen when, school-days being over, his father set him down to the old oak bench, put a file into his hand and bade him make a rough piece of brass into a wheel. He set to work the first day with an ardour which savoured of impatience, raising his head from time to time to look up to the mountain fringed with fir-trees which seemed to signal to him above the roofs, or to listen to the joyous cries of the urchins playing at marbles in the street. His father, sitting beside him at work, kept an eye on the lad and was not slow to find fault. Manuel, who had hitherto been free to come and go as he liked, was annoyed by being watched in this way. He fidgeted under the bench with his feet and kicked against the wall, while he hacked away at random with the file which, his father complained, he held like a spoon.

‘You will never be able to use a file,’ he said to Manuel on the evening of the first day, by way of encouragement ; ‘your thumb is too short—’tis hooked like a German’s ; a good

watchmaker should have a long thumb bent outwards like mine, do you see? But you take after your mother who was a peasant's daughter.'

Manuel thought to himself, 'As I shall never be able to file, what is the use of trying to learn?'

A few days later, while he was boring a hole, he drove the drill into his hand. 'The trade is getting into you,' said his father; but his hand swelled up and was useless for a day or two, and the only result was that he got a holiday, which he spent in scrambling about the woods, coming back from them with a greater longing than before for an open-air life. However, at the end of three weeks, he had learnt to file pretty well. 'You take your time about it,' said his father; 'at this rate you will be ten years before you're a workman.'

These ill-omened predictions, which were dinned into Manuel's ears from morning to night, made no impression on him. He had not the least wish to get on; he felt no shame for his awkwardness; he was bored with his work, and that was all. He did not see the use of filing, and drilling and twirling a brass wheel about; he hated it, and at last one day

threw it out of the window ; but all he gained by it was that his father pulled his ears and made him begin another.

‘What is the use of this stupid work ?’ he exclaimed one day, stamping his foot angrily.

‘That you may earn your living some day, you rascal,’ answered his father.

To earn his living ! He could have earned it more pleasantly as a porter, or mender of roads. Some days later he used his graver so awkwardly that he sent a chip of brass into his eye ; it got under the eyelid, which became inflamed, and he had at last to have the chip taken out by the doctor.

‘It’s the trade getting in,’ said his father, and Manuel took a greater dislike than ever to a trade which got in by such disagreeable ways. Not that he was a milksop ; he could have endured a hundred little annoyances in a calling which would have given him what he wanted—freedom and the exercise of his limbs in the open air. The delicate tools, the minuteness of the work, worried him intensely ; he broke, in one week, three gravers and six drills, and received in exchange, which was not surprising, a similar number of cuffs from his father.

‘You’re only fit to use pincers and nails,’ said his father irritably.

‘For Heaven’s sake give me some, and make a blacksmith of me!’

‘A blacksmith indeed, when you belong to Neuchâtel and to a family who have been watchmakers for generations! You can’t give up your hereditary vocation.’

‘My vocation is to be in the open air,’ murmured Manuel, looking enviously at the sparrows flying about the roofs.

But at last he got through his apprenticeship somehow. Only, instead of passing through a complete course of watchmaking, he simply learnt the branch of putting together and repairing under his father’s superintendence. At the end of a year he could earn thirty sous a day; a cleverer apprentice would have reached this result in six months. Out of this small sum there was breakage to be deducted, for Manuel, always rough and impatient, often broke the hand of a watch, or a stone, or spoilt a face which was worth almost as much as his day’s wages. He had come to look upon his bench and his tools as odious tyrants, as personal enemies, always ready to play him

a trick, to rob him of his earnings, and to snatch away his freedom and joy in life. Every morning when he woke his first thought was of his odious task, and he set to work in a discontented mood, looking every minute at the clock, and jumping up impatiently, so as to disturb the whole array of tiny pieces of metal arranged before him on a sheet of white paper.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ grumbled his father.

‘I have got pins and needles in my arms and legs and everywhere.’

He got up and took a turn round the room, and then sat down again with a half-sorrowful, half-angry air.

Manuel had no brothers and sisters, his mother was dead, and he was too proud to complain to his companions; he was thus thrown back upon himself and his own gloomy thoughts, and shunned the society of his comrades. Sundays were his only free and happy days. He would start at dawn, choosing by preference the most rugged paths, and enjoying the struggle with the difficulties on his way; scrambling up and down the rocks and ravines and stony clefts, and expending all the ardour

of his undisciplined powers in conquering these obstacles. Any one who had met him on these wild expeditions would not have recognised him. He laughed and talked to himself, shouted madly as he leapt over walls, or climbed to the tops of fir-trees, or amused himself with frightening the buzzards by imitating the rallying cry of the crows when they meet to exterminate their hereditary enemies. He would climb up rocks in order to roll down stones on an imaginary army; he whistled and sang, without stopping to take breath,—in fact gave himself up to a regular jollification of noise and exercise.

When service time came he went down to the village, and after a hasty dinner went off again. His father, who was no longer young, let the lad amuse himself as he liked.

‘He hasn’t a sou in his pocket,’ he thought to himself, ‘so he cannot drink or smoke, and as for bad company he must come across it sooner or later, and he may as well stand the test early.’ He thought that he had done his part duly as a parent in teaching his son an honest trade by which he might earn his own living.

One Sunday evening Manuel, who generally came home quite tired out and glad to escape to bed quickly, lingered over his supper in an unusual way, twisting his spoon about in his fingers in an undecided manner. His father guessed that he had something to say, but was silent and waited to see what would happen.

At last Manuel observed abruptly, 'I met a party of tinkers to-day who welcomed me kindly. They are willing to take me as an apprentice if you will allow it. I should go the round of France with them. I wasn't made to live shut up in a box.'

As he said this he threw open his waistcoat as if to breathe more freely in the small room.

'Let me go,' he added; 'I should always be a bad watchmaker; I want a trade where I can move about and use my arms and legs.'

'Oh, indeed, so you intend to be a tinker,' said his father ironically. 'Why not a highway robber at once? One leads to the other. When I am gone you can do what you like, but while I am alive I won't have you put in the lock-up as a vagabond. You shall work as all the honest folk of your family have done before you. When you see a girl you like, and begin to think of

marrying, you won't be so anxious to wander about.'

Manuel did not press the matter, but began to make plans how he could run away. Not long after, luckily or unluckily, his father hurt his right wrist, and was unable to work for many weeks. He never quite recovered the lightness of touch for which he had been famous, and Manuel's earnings, though very small, had to keep the house going.

Years went by, and Manuel worked like a slave to make the two ends meet, and did not always succeed, for he was only a second-rate workman, and hated his tools as instruments of daily torture as much as in the early days of his apprenticeship. He was slow and awkward over his work, and often spoilt his materials, and his father, now an old man, with feeble sight and trembling fingers, was obliged to give up to younger men the finishing off of the delicate machinery which he had formerly prided himself on making.

One day Manuel, weary of the daily routine, had made a fresh attempt to get away from it.

'There are other trades besides watchmaking.

and other places in the world besides Switzerland,' he said to his father. 'Let us go to America; I am sure I should get on there with a pair of strong arms and a stout heart.'

'And would you leave me behind like a piece of useless rubbish?' asked his father bitterly.

'You should come too, father. I would work as a sailor to pay for both our passages.'

'You're just a gipsy fellow, my lad; but a rolling stone gathers no moss.'

'Well, you haven't gathered much moss, and you haven't enjoyed the rolling either.'

'You call that enjoyment? Well, every one to his taste; but I am too old to cross the water. Go, if you like, and leave me here all alone. The parish at least will bury me.'

After this Manuel stayed at home because he thought it was his duty, but he often felt discouraged and unfit for work. Must it always be his fate, he asked himself, to spend his youth, his strength, and his energy on this thankless enervating task, which was better fitted for slighter hands than his? Must he always pace in the same treadmill, in the same monotonous circle, with its bounded horizon? Must he eat this daily bread which had no savour in it, and

live always this dull, commonplace life? Was this to be always his fate?

Yet Manuel tried to resign himself to it, and sometimes he thought that he was getting reconciled to this life, that the struggle was over; but it was only the calm which comes from weariness. The next day the storm was raging in him more violently than before.

When Manuel was twenty-two his father died. He was free at last, but he felt his loneliness bitterly. His father, though harsh and selfish and never affectionate, had yet been his father, and their interests and cares had been the same for many years. Now Manuel had only himself to think of, and need account to no one for his conduct. His chain was broken, but he had no plans or interests, and floated like a waif on a stream, caring little on which shore it will be stranded. His little room was silent, and he missed his father's voice scolding and grumbling at him. Instead of working at home as before, he decided to go to a factory which employed all kinds of workmen—good, bad, and indifferent. His wages were low, as his skill was small, but the work was ready to his hand each day. He had only just to do the task set before him, and,

when Saturday came, to pocket his pay. He was gradually and unconsciously becoming a machine. His grief at his father's death had for the time calmed down his rebellious thoughts. He said to himself: 'I did my duty at least to the poor old man till the end. It soothed his last days, and I need feel no remorse.' He even bent his stubborn nature to obey the factory rules, and was never fined for breaking them nor for unpunctuality. Every morning he went up the stairs when the shrill call-whistle was blown. He spoke to no one, and took the worst-paid work with perfect indifference.

For the first few months all went smoothly, and Manuel thought that a change had come over him at last. It was winter, and bondage is more easily borne at that season of the year. The higher forests were inaccessible on account of the deep snow, and Manuel had to keep to the beaten tracks on his Sunday excursions.

On week-days, while shut up in the large overheated room, he worked mechanically at the task set before him, but his thoughts wandered far away. He heard the faint sound of files, the creaking of the lathes, the whispered chat of the workmen, who were forbidden to talk aloud.

The noisy throbbings of the steam-engines fell on his dulled ear, and it seemed to him that he was part of the machinery, and these were the beatings of his own heart. All individual life and consciousness seemed to be gone. A strange torpor took possession of his mind. His companions seemed to him like men walking in their sleep; and when he observed that this indifference to everything was growing upon him he only said to himself: 'I am settling down; I am learning to be sensible.'

The advent of spring woke him up at last. One morning, as he drew aside his curtains, he saw the first swallow flying past his window. He followed it with his eyes. The quick, joyous movement of its wings made his heart leap. The swallow drew near, wheeling round; then, uttering a low call, went up in swift flight into the golden air of dawn, rejoicing in light and liberty. Manuel stood a long time with his face against the window pane, trying to master the feelings which surged in him. When he left the house and was on his way to the factory he saw that the lilacs were budding. Never had the day seemed so long before. The close air of the workshop oppressed him, the buzzing of the

lathes worried him. With his head bent down and his hands idly resting, he fancied himself in the forest. He heard the rustling of spring breezes, and felt round his hot head the soft breath of wakening spring. The foreman's voice woke him up two or three times from his dreams: 'Come, you are idling; are you asleep?'

The next day Manuel, instead of going to the factory, spent his time in wandering about the woods. His eager nature was again fully roused. He wanted to drink long draughts of fresh air, to stretch his cramped-up limbs, to tire himself out with wholesome exertion. He met some woodmen who were beginning to raise the great logs which had been hidden under the snow till now. He helped to send them gliding swiftly down the steep slide, and then set to work with mattock and axe to dig up an immense stump. He had the pleasure at last of seeing it with its roots up in the air.

'You have a famous pair of strong arms for a watchmaker,' said one of the woodmen.

'Ah, yes! I am too strong for such a trade; I break everything,' answered Manuel with an impatient gesture.

He went home happier than he had been for

a long time, but the next day the close air of the factory seemed unbearable to him, and he could not imagine how he could ever have breathed in it. Had he indeed sat in the same place for five months, employed in filing little pieces of metal in obedience to the orders of the foreman? Had he voluntarily shut himself up in this cage, full of disagreeable sounds and smells, when the forest and freedom were ready to welcome him with open arms? Was it indeed he, Manuel Vincent, who had worked under orders, and who had submitted to go out and in, to speak or to be silent, according to rules and at the call of a whistle? No; he had been asleep, but now he was himself again, full of energy and of plans. Where should he go? Right away, wherever it might be.

He would have made an excellent colonist, and would have been in his element in a new country, for all he asked to have was plenty of fresh air and elbow room. He preferred solitude to society; he was ready to give up every comfort, and had a proud pleasure in the exercise of his strength and agility which compensated him for the loss of all other delights. His old idea of emigrating came back to him, but his father's

illness had used up all his savings and he had not a sou left. How could he pay his journey to Havre? He must work a few months longer in the factory and save up a small sum. Besides, summer had come, and the Sunday excursions would make up to him for his self-imposed slavery and render it easier to bear.

With this aim before him, Manuel felt all his old energy aroused; he almost got to like his work, and laboured with all the strange ardour of his character, showing such zeal that he received a small but unexpected addition to his wages. He was soon able to put by fifty francs, which he hid in a box in a far corner of his chest, and every week several five franc pieces were added to his store. Manuel handled them with a miser's delight; this little treasure was to ransom him from slavery, and give him wings to escape to unknown lands.

In order to live more economically Manuel sacrificed his solitude, and took as lodger, to share his room, a young man who worked near him at the factory. This youth was a native of a small French village on the frontier, and had come to Switzerland to get better wages. His name was Constant Loison. He was phlegmatic,

industrious, eager to get money, and a very skilful workman, with a good deal of intelligence, so that his masters had noticed him, and promised to make him a foreman as soon as there was a vacancy in the staff.

Manuel was attracted to him by the very contrast of their characters. His comrade's rather prosaic and commonplace nature was a counterbalance to his own enthusiastic ideas. He liked to make him talk, and this was not difficult to do. Constant Loison was very pleased to discuss other people's affairs, but less ready to talk of his own. One day, however, being in a confidential mood, while they were leaning out of the window smoking their evening cigars, he confided to Manuel his love affairs. He first spoke vaguely of his future plans, then all at once confessed frankly that he had lost his heart to a young girl on the frontier; she was French like himself, very pretty and very quick-witted, and a Catholic, which would make it easier to get the necessary marriage license.

'I have not made much way with her yet,' he added; 'she laughs at me when I go to see her; she is capricious, and may change her mind suddenly some day. Her mother is well-to-do,

and will give her a good outfit, and perhaps a sum of money to begin housekeeping.'

When Manuel asked the young lady's name and where she lived, Constant seemed to regret having told so much, and immediately changed the subject. Manuel soon forgot what his comrade had confided to him till circumstances recalled it.

Some weeks later there was an important election, and the candidate, supported by the head of the factory, won the victory. All the workmen took a holiday to celebrate the occasion, and the workshops were deserted. Manuel, delighted to get away, started early in the morning on the road to Brenets, and soon found himself at the entrance of the gorge where the river Doubs runs. Heated by his rapid walk, he went into a public-house by the roadside and asked for a glass of beer.

Before sitting down he took a glance round the room, which was dimly lighted by a small window with dusty and dirty panes.

'I declare it is he!' he exclaimed, letting his fist fall on the table.

Constant Loison, who was sitting at the farther end of the room, got up with a sheepish air and went to Manuel.

‘You remember,’ he whispered, taking him aside, ‘the girl I spoke to you about the other day. I have come to see her; it was just a good opportunity for a visit.’

‘Does she live here?’ asked Manuel, surprised.

‘No, not exactly; I was on the way to her when I met some—well—some friends. One must do the civil sometimes, and we turned in here, and I am treating them to drink.’

‘Your friends look an odd lot,’ said Manuel in his offhand way.

At the end of the room three or four strongly-built lads with pipes in their mouths were sitting round a table drinking. They wore the blue linen blouse with pearl buttons, the loose bright-coloured necktie, and the soft felt hat of the men of Franche Comté. They were bold-looking fellows, with their curled-up moustaches and free-and-easy style of dress, and their manners were a curious contrast to the timid, cautious behaviour of Constant Loison.

‘Upon my word, I think that he is ashamed of us,’ said one of them. ‘Come, Constant, no false pride; bring your friend here, and let us drink together.’

‘Bring him!’ shouted all the others in chorus; ‘the friends of our friends are ours too.’

Manuel carried his glass to the table where they were sitting, and they made room for him.

‘You seem to be a watchmaker,’ said his neighbour, after they had drunk all round.

‘Yes.’

‘Do you find it amusing?’

‘No.’

‘Does it pay well?’

‘Pretty well,’ answered Manuel, who did not like being catechised.

‘They say it’s not a good trade now, for prices have fallen,’ said another; ‘in order to get on one must have two strings to one’s bow, like our friend Constant here.’

At that moment Constant Loison stretched his open hand on the table, with the thumb well away from the fingers; it seemed to be a signal, for every one became silent at once. Manuel, irritated by this suspicious silence, looked around him ironically. He had soon discovered that these hardy youths were smugglers from their bold yet mysterious looks, and the leisure they were enjoying on a week-day, as if they had no need to work. He got up abruptly.

‘Don’t let me disturb you,’ he said. ‘You have your little business to talk over. By the way, Constant, have you also joined the illicit traders?’

‘You need not talk about it at home,’ said Constant carelessly; ‘our masters might not like it; they are prejudiced. Besides, it is not just as you think. I am a steady lad; you know that quite well, since we are room-mates, and work in the same shop. But I have some friends who, as you say, are in the border trade, and who want some capital to work with, so I lend them my little savings to oblige them.’

‘You get good interest for it,’ growled one of these friends.

‘And quite right too, for I run great risks. We are unlucky just now; but you don’t care to hear all this, Manuel.’

‘Oh yes, I do,’ said the latter with a spice of irony. He sat down again, while the others went on smoking quietly and listening to the dialogue.

On all this frontier, where smuggling is considered almost as good as any other trade, no great mystery is made about it. The Custom-House officers know the smugglers personally.

and do not quarrel with them as much as might be expected, except that they exchange shots when they are about their business. In private life they are even sometimes on friendly terms. As for the good people on the frontiers, they saw nothing wrong in smuggling. The 'border lads' were generally much liked on account of their courage; only they were blamed for spending recklessly in a day what they had earned in a night. 'He's a good fellow; he does a little business in tobacco, you know;' and this euphemism, 'a little business,' was quite understood. Indeed, the feeling of most of the population is in favour of the encouragement of free trade, by which they get their sugar and tobacco cheap.

Thus it was that the comrades of Constant were not much disturbed by having their real occupation revealed to Manuel. As for Constant himself, he seemed to be much annoyed. The reason of this was that he had been engaged for some time in a very profitable though not very honest trade—of sending machinery for watches, by means of the smugglers, to a French house of business, which was in eager rivalry with the factory where he himself was employed. If this

were found out he would lose his place. He was meditating how he could shut Manuel's mouth, and all at once an idea struck him. Just then one of the smugglers, whose mouth was all on one side from his habit of talking with a pipe in the corner of it, joined in the conversation.

'For my part, I know what it is to work at the bench too like you. I used to make handles for files, and I still make them sometimes at odd moments; but is that a trade to suit bold fellows like us? I should have grown crazy over it. I must warm my blood with something more exciting. The revenue men, it's true, have all the trumps on their side—guns, laws, spies; in spite of that we lick them well four times out of five.'

'But the fifth time you are beaten, and our gains are lost,' said Constant in a melancholy voice.

'As I told you, Manuel, we have been out of luck for some time.' He sat down, took up his glass, and continued in a deliberate voice: 'People say that a newcomer always brings back the luck; is that true, comrades?'

'It has been known to do so,' answered the man

with the wry mouth, who seemed to be the spokesman of the band.

‘What do you think of my friend Manuel as a comrade?’ asked Constant, twisting his red beard in his fingers.

Manuel was more surprised than any one at this remark; he jumped up from his chair and burst out laughing. ‘It is indeed an offer to be proud of,’ he said ironically.

‘I am not joking,’ said Constant.

The smugglers, with stolid faces, only showed their surprise by sending out larger puffs of smoke than usual from their pipes.

‘My suggestion would be advantageous to all parties,’ continued Constant. ‘You need not join the band for good and all, Manuel; just one or two runs to bring back the luck. I am sure it would amuse you. I know you well; you are just as much cut out for the work as a dog is meant to use his teeth; besides, you would put some money in your pocket.’

‘And besides that,’ added Manuel, throwing himself back in his chair, and looking at his friend with a twinkle in his eye, ‘you would be very pleased to have a secret of mine to keep. There

would be no fear then of my telling yours if I had one of my own on my conscience.'

The smugglers laughed loudly at this sally, for, more bold than cunning, they were all entangled in the meshes of Constant Loison, and were not sorry to see him 'bowled over,' as they said, by the new-comer.

'Yet I feel tempted to join,' added Manuel, leaning his elbows on the table and resting his chin on his hands. 'I don't deny that I am tempted,'—he paused for a moment, and then raised his head abruptly and went on—'I am no great judge—I see there is something for and against your trade,—you may perhaps be angry with me, but I don't feel sure that it is an honest trade.'

He got up, and holding the back of his chair in both hands, waited to see the result of these remarks.

'Upon my word,' said the wry-mouthed speaker, 'you are quite right to say your mind frankly; one can reason with you.' Then turning to his comrades, 'Let me manage it, boys; I will explain the gist of the matter to him. You know I have read a lot about it in books and newspapers. I had to set my conscience at rest

like anybody else—one wants to be honest while doing a little business. Well, this is the way I explain matters. Liberty is a good thing—you grant that I suppose?’

‘Certainly,’ answered Manuel.

‘If a thing is good you can’t have too much of it—it must be everywhere (it seems to me that I argue correctly); then free trade ought to be established, and we are working for that. You see me here, just as I am, in a blouse and a wide-awake; but I am an apostle of liberty, I may become a martyr in the cause, and the blood of martyrs is the seed of smugglers.’ He went on, speaking more emphatically, ‘Smuggling will endure as long as the Custom-House exists. Brothers, we are united in a holy cause, let no base fears make you desert your colours which ——’ here he paused to drink off his glass, and all the rest laughed and shouted, ‘Long live the orator, long live Firmin Mitou!’

Manuel shrugged his shoulders. ‘I was foolish enough to listen to you, thinking that you meant to argue seriously, but at the end of a few words you go off into rhodomontade.’

‘It’s because I am in the habit of making speeches,’ answered Firmin. ‘If you like we will

begin again. You will understand it all in a minute. Now *here* is my grandfather'—he put a glass before Manuel,—‘he makes file-handles, as all our family have done since the flood. And *there* is a tobacco-merchant,’ and he placed a bottle opposite the glass. ‘Now by ill-luck the frontier is between them,’ and he put a knife between the glass and the bottle; ‘now the tobacco-merchant is represented by this bottle.’

‘I should understand quite as well without all that nonsense,’ interrupted Manuel impatiently.

‘Not at all; the eye helps the imagination, as is well known. The tobacco-merchant, I say, represented by this bottle, offers his goods to my grandfather at a low price. My grandfather, much pleased, says to me, “Go, my boy, you have a good pair of legs, and mine are old, run and fetch me some packets of that cheap tobacco.” I readily obey, and run and fill my basket with it, and come back jumping over the knife—that is the frontier. Just then “Stop,” cries a cross old dame, the Excise; “come, my lad, into my office, and tell your grandfather from me that he must smoke no other tobacco except mine.”—“But it’s too dear.”—“Never mind that; I have caught you, my boy, in the act of

transgression ; you must pay the fine, or leave your basket here." I run away ; she sends her men after me ; I have longer legs than they ; I escape. The next time I take care not to go near her office ; there are many paths across the frontier. I choose the worst, out of politeness to the Custom-House men, leaving them the better roads. Why do they complain of that ? Why do they choose to come and hide themselves in our breakneck paths in order to catch me and steal my goods in the rudest way possible ? Come, tell me, is this justice ; is this freedom ? Why shouldn't I buy my sugar and watches in Switzerland, as long as I pay for them ? What is the use of my being free to work if I may not spend my money as I choose ? The Custom-House men accuse me of making them turn out at night, which is bad for their rheumatism, and of leading them into dangerous places, and even of sending small-shot among them when they come too near. Upon my word, I also should much prefer travelling on the high-road by daylight, for I also am rheumatic. Why do they hinder me ?'

The speaker sat down.

'He doesn't argue badly, does he ?' asked Constant, coming up to Manuel. 'You have

scruples, I daresay, but you won't be bound to us for ever; when you have turned the luck you can leave off. I am thinking of your good too. Do you think that I can't see that you are bored to death in the workshop? I am showing you a way to get a little excitement in your life. If we were in a large town I should advise you to go to the theatre; but this is something even better; you have the chance of playing a part in the piece itself. We have tragic adventures sometimes in our excursions.'

'Do you join in them yourself?' asked Manuel.

'No; unfortunately I am prevented. I have a weak leg; a sinew strained when I was a boy. I couldn't bear the long marches.'

Manuel shrugged his shoulders slightly, and his lips smiled contemptuously. The smugglers got up; they seemed uncertain what to do.

'It is time for us to start,' said Constant in a loud voice. 'Are you coming, Manuel?'

'What, with us?' asked one of the men with a distrustful look.

'Yes, certainly, with us.'

'To the rendezvous down there?'

'Yes, of course.'

‘Upon my word, it is a great risk. What do we know about him?’

‘I will answer for him,’ said Constant, putting his hand on Manuel’s shoulder. ‘I know him.’

‘I have not the least wish to betray you,’ said Manuel coldly, as he looked round at the smugglers. ‘I swear to tell no one of what I have heard here by accident.’

Constant Loison breathed freely. This oath was at least enough, but if only Manuel would commit himself by joining, they would be still surer of his secrecy. As they left the inn, Manuel, who thought Firmin’s conversation amusing, went up to him and asked him several questions. He was surprised to receive only vague answers given in a cross voice. Firmin was always ready to talk on general questions; but he had this peculiarity, that if any details were asked for he became as mute as a fish. Manuel, rather annoyed by this strange behaviour, left him and went on, while Firmin drew near to Constant and muttered, ‘You must take all the risks and dangers; we will give him a bale to carry, since the goods are yours; but you know the path is rough, although you never were there,’ he added, in a rather sarcastic voice.

‘Don’t be afraid,’ said Constant; ‘he has a steady head and a famous pair of legs. Do you think I am a goose? I know what I am about. There are not enough of us to carry on the business; we want new recruits, and here is one ready to hand; let us try his mettle, and when he has stood the test, we can see about getting him to join for good and all. Come, Firmin, are you willing?’

‘Of course I must agree, now that you take him under your protection,’ said the other, shrugging his shoulders; ‘but let us see first what Jonquille says.’

CHAPTER II

‘ HERE you are at last, Jonquille ; come quick ! ’ cried Mother Salomé, standing on the threshold of the little inn, her hands on her hips, and her cap all on one side.

But even her scolding tones were scarcely loud enough to be heard above the tumult of the foaming waters which rushed over the dam, and beat furiously against the garden wall. Jonquille came slowly down the rough path, stopping here and there to pick a flower, or to roll a pebble down the slope. Though she could see her mother making signs impatiently, she paid little attention to her, and even seemed to slacken her steps on purpose, treading as carefully as if she were trying to avoid quicksands.

‘ Well, mother, what’s happened now ? ’ she asked carelessly when she reached the bottom of the slope.

‘I want you, you gadabout, and you choose to run wild in the woods all day. Our boys are in the parlour; go and wait on them; I cannot leave my frying-pan. Go quickly, and throw away that bush that you are carrying as solemnly as if it were a wax taper in church.’

Jonquille was carefully carrying a fine raspberry bush covered with ripe fruit, which she had brought away, roots and all.

‘They may wait a little,’ she said to herself, shrugging her shoulders; ‘Pierre shall have his raspberries first.’

She climbed up the narrow, slippery stairs which led to the story above and gently opened the door of a small room where the sun was shining brightly.

‘Look, Pierre,’ she said, ‘what I have brought you!’

A pale, delicate lad of fifteen was lying back in a straw armchair near to the open window; his face wore a gentle, sad expression, and his dreamy brown eyes had a look of patient suffering, while his lips, tightly pressed together, seemed to have long forced themselves to keep back complaints.

‘How do you feel to-day, dear Pierre?’ asked his sister as she stooped to kiss him.

‘A little better, thank you.’

It was the same answer every day, and Jonquille shook her head and sighed.

‘I should like so much to stay with you,’ she said; ‘but I must be busy downstairs. I will come back as soon as I can and bring a small box to plant this bush in; and then you will be able to pick raspberries for yourself, just as if you were in the wood. Do you want anything? Let me shake up your pillows.’

She was holding Pierre up with one hand and turning the pillow with the other, when an impatient voice was heard calling ‘Jonquille, Jonquille!’

‘Go directly,’ said Pierre; ‘don’t make her angry.’

Jonquille shook the dark curls which fell over her forehead with a defiant air, just as an untamed colt shakes out its mane; but seeing that Pierre looked frightened she ran downstairs.

The door of the parlour was open, and the smugglers were standing round Constant and whispering together mysteriously, while Manuel

stood alone in a corner near the window, looking out absently at the view. The roaring river was sparkling in the sun; great jets of foam in rainbow tints flew up as the water fell over the dam and danced with a kind of savage joy round great masses of rock, as if they were conquered foes. Lofty, stern cliffs closed the gorge on all sides except towards the west, where they stood aside to let the blue mountains appear on the horizon lighted up by the rays of the sun.

Jonquille paused on the threshold and observed Manuel without his remarking it. She stood in a careless attitude, with one hand resting lightly on her hip. The outline of her lithe figure was seen under the folds of a loose linen jacket, a little yellow silk kerchief suited her soft brown complexion and sparkling hazel eyes, her wavy hair fell down behind in a tangled mass of curls, and her little upturned chin and rosy lips had a look of saucy archness. She had been standing thus a few minutes when she felt herself seized by the arm and rudely shaken.

‘Will you do what I tell you, at last, you idle girl, you good-for-nothing creature? I

have been shouting myself hoarse, calling to you, for the last hour.'

Jonquille shook herself free abruptly, and turned round to face her mother. The hostess and her daughter were exactly alike in features, but the expressions were totally different, and this made the two faces strangely like and yet unlike.

Salomé Juvaret had been handsome, and might still have appeared so if she had taken the trouble to wash and comb herself occasionally; but her rough hair fell down from her cap in tangled locks, and her face and hands showed an intimate acquaintance with black saucepans and the coal-hole. One might have overlooked these faults, perhaps, if she had had a frank, open countenance like Jonquille's. But her dark eyes had a cold, penetrating, yet furtive look, as if she were trying to find the weak corner in one's character, and the way to one's purse. She had a miser's hands—long, thin, trembling with eagerness to grasp at everything that came in their way.

'Come, come, no quarrelling,' said Constant Loison. 'Go back to your saucepans, Mother Salomé, and get us a nice dish of trout ready

for dinner. In the meanwhile, Jonquille shall fetch us a bottle of wine.'

Jonquille went to the cupboard and opened it, then turning suddenly to Firmin 'Who is that fellow?' she asked, pointing to Manuel.

Firmin shrugged his shoulders. 'A new fellow, an amateur.'

'All right,' said Jonquille with the manner of an officer to whom a report has just been made.

Then she walked straight up to the newcomer and said, 'What is your name?'

'Manuel Vincent; and yours, my pretty girl?'

Jonquille looked up haughtily, and her sparkling eyes met those of the daring youth, who was looking up at her and twisting his moustache. She gave him no answer, but, with the air of an insulted queen, she turned to her staff—

'Who is this ill-mannered youth you have brought me?' she asked; then, putting the necessary bottles and glasses on the table, she went away, not deigning to glance at any one.

Many angry eyes were now fixed on Manuel, who stood, vexed and silent, leaning against the window with his arms folded. He looked like

a careless wrestler who knows his own strength but disdains to use it. His bronzed face was framed, as it were, by his large black felt hat, his eyes were keen and proud; the lines in his forehead, his marked features, his great height, and abrupt, impatient movements,—all these were signs of a nature strong indeed, but undisciplined.

‘Good evening to you!’ he exclaimed at last; ‘I am here like a bull in a china shop; I shall go off.’

He turned towards the door, but Constant put his hand on his shoulder.

‘Stop,’ he said, ‘if you want to join the band, you must treat Jonquille with respect, and not speak to her as you did just now.’

‘And, pray, how am I to speak to her? Must one be silver-tongued? No, thank you; that’s not my way.’

‘You don’t know her; she is a good girl, brave and clever to the tips of her fingers; if it hadn’t been for her we should have been caught fifty times. I tell you frankly, if she takes a dislike to you, it is all over with you, my good fellow.’

‘Thank you; I have as yet nothing to do

either with her or with you,' said Manuel hoarsely, getting more and more angry. 'If you all like to be in leading-strings to a girl, that is your lookout; but I don't admire your taste. I suppose you are all in love with her yellow silk kerchief.'

He laughed contemptuously, but the smugglers, looking furious, formed a circle round him.

'Come, come, Manuel did not mean to insult us!' cried Constant; 'he doesn't know Jonquille: and how should he have an idea of all she does for us? She is the real captain, and knows all the by-ways, and hates the Custom-House fellows like sin.'

'Don't forget either,' interrupted Firmin, 'how often she has kept watch by the river-side, ready to bring us across in her boat if the path were beset.'

'She bound up my wound with her own beautiful silk handkerchief, which she tore up as if it were a rag!' cried another, pushing Firmin aside, that he might catch Manuel's attention. 'I had got a charge of buckshot in my shoulder, and Jonquille bound it up as well as the regimental surgeon would have done without making faces, though I was

bleeding freely. Mayn't one admire her yellow silk kerchief after all that? Eh!'

Manuel was losing his angry look and getting interested in what he heard, when the door half-opened, and Jonquille's brown head looked in. 'Pierre wants to go down into the garden,' she said; 'come and help us, Firmin.'

Firmin got up directly and followed her.

'What do you think of that fellow, Jonquille?' he asked, pointing with a contemptuous gesture over his shoulder.

'The newcomer? He is a fine lad; a head taller than any of you,' she answered, throwing a mischievous side-glance at her questioner. 'Don't let him join your band, for I foresee that in three days he would become captain of you all.'

'Oh, not so fast, if you please; long service surely counts for something. Besides, if we chose a captain at all, it would be you, Jonquille.'

'I shall be your captain's wife, and that comes to the same thing,' she answered, laughing.

'Constant is determined to force his friend on us,' continued Firmin; 'but if you don't approve of him, you have only to give the order, and he shall be sent back to where he came from.'

Jonquille half closed her eyes as if to try and fathom her own thoughts. 'I don't dislike him on the whole,' she answered slowly. Her eyes sparkled with amusement when she saw her companion's disappointed look. 'He wants a little training,' she added. 'I have nothing to say against him except that; and if Constant answers for him—— but I will make him talk and find out what he is like; don't be afraid.'

While dinner was getting ready the smugglers went to a skittle ground not far from the house, near the shed where the wood and the fishing-tackle were stored. Manuel, who had never played, and was afraid of exposing his ignorance, went off by himself quietly, with his hands in his pockets, down to the river.

There was a large, broken-down water-wheel on the edge of the stream, overrun by luxurious masses of wallflower and delicate fringes of grasses, while an old wall was half concealed by the starry flowers of wild clematis. The clear stream, rippling onwards towards the weir, lapped softly on the white pebbly shore. It was a pretty picture, full of life and motion. Manuel sat down on the bank under the shade of an elder tree, and watched the running water

at his feet, glittering behind the screen of leaves.

He fell into a reverie. Something told him that this bright, sunny, summer's day was the great day, the turning-point of his life. He felt the crisis coming. Ought he to struggle against destiny, or let it take its way? Was it for good or for evil that he felt himself thus impelled onwards? Chance and circumstances had given him an opportunity and were urging him to make use of it. Should he turn back or seize the chance offered him? Manuel was not the man to do things by halves. If he started on this career he did not mean to turn back. Besides, he knew his own nature too well. This adventurous smuggling life suited his tastes so exactly that he could never give it up if he once began. He looked at the water merrily running down the gorge. Why not follow its example? Liberty is so delightful! To be free to do what one likes the whole week through, to wake each morning with the intoxicating certainty that no foreman or master was awaiting one, to live out of doors all day, to go off on hazardous expeditions all night—in fact, to have a new zest given to the former dull life! And why not?

‘A smuggler is not a thief,’ he said to himself; ‘he is a man who stands up for the rights of the community. Firmin was right after all, in spite of the nonsense he talked. To be sure I might go to America, and exile might be better than the dull monotony of life in a workshop; but if one clings to one’s own country——? It is hard to leave the familiar paths, the murmuring river, the well-known outlines of the mountains, the bank where at evening one loved to sit, the mossy glen where one gathered mushrooms in spring. The trifling accustomed sights and sounds are all threads one cannot bear to break, because they are so intertwined with one’s inmost being. But why break them? Why emigrate?’

A branch was drifting down the stream; Manuel’s eye was caught by it, and, in order to watch it go over the weir, he drew aside the leafy boughs which hid the bottom of the gorge and Salomé’s house, with its garden looking down on the river. Shading his eyes from the dazzling water he looked thither.

In the middle of the sunny garden Pierre was half lying, half sitting in his old armchair. His head was a little thrown back, and his thin hands were folded on his knees. He seemed to

be drinking in the pleasant warmth which was so good for him. Jonquille, quite content to be doing nothing, was sitting in a low chair by his side. In front of them was a large bed of those old-fashioned perennials which require little care, and seem to flower each summer of their own accord. The hollyhocks were beginning to open their large crumpled petals, the larkspurs lifted their dark blue heads proudly, and sweet wall-flowers, great pink and lilac mallows, and sun-flowers, with their golden shields, opened out their gay blossoms joyously in the bright sunlight, under the shelter of the old wall covered with clematis. The river gleamed beyond; the light foliage of the beeches was reflected in it, swaying gently with the breeze, as if the boughs were playing hide-and-seek with the waves below. Even the sombre firs seemed to smile gravely on this bright summer's day.

‘Jonquille,’ said Pierre, ‘don’t go back to them; stay with me, won’t you?’ and he looked towards the place where the group of smugglers were gathered—some finishing their game, others lying idly stretched out in the sun.

‘Just as you like, Pierre,’ said Jonquille gently, leaning her head on her brother’s shoulder.

‘When I see you all alone amongst them,’ he added with a thoughtful look, ‘I am always reminded of the woman who went into the lion’s cage. Do you remember; it was a long time ago at the fair? The lion allowed her to sit on his back, to plait his mane, and to pull his ears. He seemed as tame as a great hound. But a few weeks afterwards we heard that he had killed her with a stroke of his paw.’

Jonquille smiled. ‘I would just as soon die in that way as in any other,’ she said.

Pierre put his hand before her mouth.

‘You rule them all with your little finger, but can this go on much longer?’ he asked. ‘You may want a man to protect you some day; but I shall never be anything but a poor creature,’ he added with a sigh.

Jonquille bent down to him tenderly.

‘I like you just as you are, dear. I would not exchange you for a dozen stronger brothers.’

And strange to say, in spite of his frail health, he guarded his sister from many a danger. If Pierre had not been there, with his delicate tact, warning and restraining her, Jonquille might have become rough and unwomanly; but the time she spent by his side made her voice grow

gentle, her step light, her touch caressing. Pierre's influence was all the more effective because it was unconscious. He loved his sister with passionate gratitude. He never thought that Jonquille could do wrong.

'Now, you needn't go back to them,' he argued persistently; 'the lads can dine without you. Go and fetch your knitting, and we will enjoy ourselves quietly here while they make a noise in the parlour.'

'My knitting!' exclaimed Jonquille, stretching herself out indolently to bask in the sun like a kitten. 'Oh, I am so awkward; I drop my stitches; the wool gets in a tangle. It fidgets me to knit.'

'Well, then, get your spinning-wheel. I like to see you spin. If you only knew how nice you look then. I am sure that Queen Bertha was not so pretty as you.'

'Ah! you try to coax me with flattery,' said Jonquille, laughing. 'If you would only say that it pleases you, Pierre, that would be a better reason than any other to me.'

She ran with light steps to the house, and came back in a few minutes with a work-basket on her arm.

‘Something has gone wrong with my spinning-wheel!’ she cried; ‘the wheel is broken, the treadle is out of order.’

‘I will mend it to-morrow,’ said Pierre; ‘but just now my back hurts me a little.’

He met his sister’s eyes, which were full of anxious inquiry.

‘It’s nothing,’ he added. ‘I am tired; that’s all—tired though I have done nothing,’ he said in a low voice, turning his head away.

Jonquille threw both her arms round his neck.

‘Now you are talking nonsense, dear Pierre,’ she said reproachfully. ‘Done nothing, indeed! Why, you work harder than any one in the house. To be sure you don’t chop wood—there are plenty of rough fellows for that sort of work,—but you mend everything that gets broken; you write all our letters, keep the accounts, where mother and I should make a muddle, and read books, so that you can tell us about them afterwards, and make me a little less ignorant than I should be. Isn’t all that doing something?’

Pierre smiled, and said, ‘By the way, talking of letter-writing, Mareelin made me write yesterday to the shopkeeper, for whom he makes handles for files, in this way: “Excuse me, sir,

for having delayed in carrying out your order. I was obliged to go and bury my father ; this shan't happen again." And he always makes me end the letter, " Believe me, yours sincerely and obediently."'

Jonquille laughed, and Pierre continued, ' It is sometimes very amusing to write letters for them ; and then they tell me stories quite as interesting as those in books, or more, because of the gestures with which they tell them. They are very good fellows by daylight ; but I am told that at night they are a mad set. But you know more about that than I do, Jonquille.'

Jonquille put her fingers on her lips.

' It doesn't do to talk about that ; our lads don't like it. Just see how your stories have made me get on with my knitting ; it's wonderful ; no one else could do it. Now, while I am knitting, tell me the story of Queen Bertha, who wasn't prettier than I am ; do.'

There were four or five pairs of half-finished stockings in her basket. They must have been lying there a long time, to judge by the quantity of dust which Jonquille shook out from them, as she held them up, and looked at them with an air of perplexity.

‘What a pity that it takes two to make a pair,’ she said, sighing; ‘the first is all very well, but the trouble is to make a second just like it. Come, here are two that might do very well as a pair; only one is gray, and the other brown.’

Jonquille was not quite as awkward as she pretended to be, and soon the click of her needles was heard as an accompaniment to the story of Bertha, the queen who span so well. Pierre told it gravely, with a number of details not mentioned in the old tale.

He leant on his elbow, with his cheek resting on his hand, and the excitement of story-telling had brought a little colour to his face. His eyes rested on his sister, who sometimes smiled up at him and then bent her eyes on her work, frowning and pouting her lips as she came across some difficulty. Sometimes she held up her stocking and looked at it with critical, half-shut eyes to see what shape it was taking; in short, she was as solemn as was fit for such a serious enterprise.

‘Queen Bertha,’ said Pierre, with his eyes still resting on Jonquille, ‘went about the country on her little white ambling palfrey; a distaff, with fine wool on it, and ornamented with a silver ribbon, was fastened to her saddle-bow, and a

silver spindle hung from her girdle ; she spun as she went along, and a fine gold ring shone on her hand. The queen had dark brown hair, waving and curling, and it fell down her back, though she plaited it up each morning. She didn't wear her crown when she was travelling ; it was too heavy and too grand for every day ; she wore it only on Sundays, and the rest of the week she wore a large hat. For good Queen Bertha liked simple ways. She had brown eyes, with long silky lashes, which cast a shadow on her cheeks when she bent them down over her knitting—no, I mean her distaff. But her eyes were stern when she raised them to rebuke any wicked lord ; yet they could look very soft when she smiled at some shepherdess spinning like herself. Queen Bertha travelled so much through the country in the hot sun that her skin was sun-burnt, yet it was soft and fine as a princess's should be. She wore a pretty yellow silk kerchief round her neck——'

Jonquille raised her eyes, laughing.

'That's not fair !' she cried ; ' I was listening to you with both ears so attentively, and then you begin to describe me. I know very well that I am pretty after my own fashion, for I have been

told it often enough ; but Queen Bertha had blue eyes and golden hair, and skin as white as the holy Virgin's ; a brown skin, and eyes the colour of blackberries in the hedges, are only fit for a smuggler's wife—there now, I have dropped a stitch.'

At this moment Mother Salomé appeared at the garden fence.

'Jonquille,' she called out, 'we have no more white wine, and won't the lads be angry. Run to Moron and ask them to let us have five or six bottles, and to tell the carter to bring us a small cask the first time he comes this way. If you are quick you can be back in three-quarters of an hour. Come, get your basket and be off.'

Jonquille frowned and looked vexed.

'Upon my word, the boys could do without white wine for once in a way and not be the worse for it. Must I leave you, Pierre, just when we were so comfortably settled, and that my stocking was getting on quite nicely ?'

'Do what she tells you,' said Pierre ; 'you know how mother can scold when she gets angry, and what bad words she says. Go quickly, there will still be plenty of time when you come back.'

Jonquille got up reluctantly and went towards

the house. When she came out of it she had put on her shady hat, and carried a basket out of which peeped the necks of several bottles. She held a book in the other hand.

‘See, Pierre,’ she said, stroking his cheek, ‘here is a new book to amuse you. I think it must be a nice story, for the pictures at least look amusing.’

‘Why are you always buying me new books?’ asked Pierre reproachfully. ‘I have plenty now; I can read the old ones over again. Jonquille, where do you get the money that you spend on me?’

She blushed and answered, ‘I earn it.’

Then she turned away abruptly and left him. A minute after she was going up the path just above where Manuel was sitting. When he heard her light step he looked up.

He had been thinking of her, of her proud looks, and of the stories he had just heard about her. In a moment he was on his feet, suddenly inspired by the wish to restore himself into the good graces of the smugglers’ queen. He climbed up the bank, sprung over a rock that stopped the way, and found himself by Jonquille’s side. She looked at him with a cold,

inquiring air, and all at once he felt embarrassed. He said to himself that he did not know how to talk to girls, especially to such a one as Jonquille, who seemed easily offended. His first attempt had been so unlucky that he hardly expected to be more successful the second time.

‘Give me your basket,’ he said at last abruptly; ‘we are going the same road.’

‘So much the worse,’ she said in an ungracious tone.

He looked at her and frowned; but hardly knowing why, he went on walking by her side. They had been silent for some minutes, when Jonquille suddenly remembered that she might use this unexpected *tête-à-tête* in order to find out what the new comrade was like, as she had promised Firmin she would. She stopped a moment and said, ‘I want that bit of green up there,’ pointing with her finger to a large fern which was waving like a plume on the top of a pyramid of rocks which had fallen, and were now covered with moss, and heaped one on another in unstable equilibrium.

Manuel gave a bound, and put his foot on a stone which shook beneath him, but he did not give it time to fall before he had scrambled up

to the top of the pile. He stooped and picked the fern, and with two bounds was again on the path.

‘That wasn’t badly done, you upset nothing,’ said Jonquille, and with the air of a queen who confers a favour on a subject of humblest degree she added, ‘You may carry my basket.’ Then she took the fern Manuel had brought her, twisted it up into a little green ball, and threw it carelessly into the river.

Manuel was too proud to take any notice of this; his face betrayed nothing, and they both walked on together.

‘He has a sure foot and a quick eye for the best path,’ said Jonquille to herself; ‘not a stone rolled away under him, but something more is wanted to make a good smuggler.’

‘Why do they call you Jonquille?’ asked Manuel suddenly.

He was not a great talker and quite ignorant of the art of changing the subject in conversation.

‘It was a painter who called me that,’ said Jonquille. ‘The priest had done his best by me and baptized me Barnabée after his patron saint. St. Barnabas. But those grand names are fit

for good girls who hem pocket-handkerchiefs all day long ; it was as ill-suited to me as a holy rosary is to a little imp. At least the artist said so ; and he spent a fortnight with us just on purpose to paint my picture. He called me Jonquille because I am fond of yellow, and because I am a proud wild-flower, as he used to say. A proud wild-flower,' she repeated, bending her head ; 'that is very pretty—too pretty for me. I am only a naughty girl ; ask my mother, and she will tell you so.'

She began to laugh, then suddenly looked as solemn as a judge.

'How old are you ?' she asked.

'Twenty-three.'

'What is your trade ?'

'A watchmaker.'

'Have you any one belonging to you ?'

'No, I am quite alone,' answered Manuel rather sadly.

She looked at him for a moment and her voice became less stern.

'Do you wish to belong to the band ?'

'I have not made up my mind.'

'You have made a mistake,' she interrupted him in an ironical tone ; 'it is *we* who have not

made up our minds whether we will let you join ; we are not at all sure. Oh, indeed ! So you thought that it was for you to decide ; you shall make up your mind at once, do you hear ! Fancy coming to my mother's house before you had made up your mind. I shall count ten, and if you don't say Yes before I have finished, it shall be No, Mr. Watchmaker.'

She stopped, and stood with her arms folded and an imperious look.

Manuel's fiery blood mounted to his cheeks in anger, then he became pale and bit his lips. He placed himself in front of Jonquille, and in a restrained voice said—

'It shall be neither Yes nor No till I choose to decide. Besides, begging your pardon, my dealings are with Constant Loison and not with petticoats.'

To his great surprise Jonquille, instead of giving him an angry look, burst out laughing.

'That's quite right,' she said, 'that is your answer ; but remember, no one joins the band without my permission ; so you will have to ask me this evening to give it.'

'We shall see,' said the youth in a low voice.

Jonquille walked on humming a tune.

‘Have you known Constant Loison long?’ she asked, after a few minutes.

‘About a year; and how long have you known him?’

‘I can’t say; I don’t remember. He is one of my admirers; but I don’t pay any attention to that.’

‘One of your admirers? Have you got a great many, pray?’

‘Twelve or thirteen; I don’t know exactly how many.’

She stood still, and her bright eyes looked at him under her lashes.

‘I can’t help it,’ she continued, as she saw that he looked horrified; ‘I don’t want them. I would gladly get rid of them all—thirteen to the dozen, and not dear!’

Manuel coughed to clear his voice, for he felt a choking in his throat. He was not sentimental, but to see this young girl growing up like a wild-flower at her own free will without guidance or support touched his heart.

‘Listen to me,’ he said abruptly, for he felt awkward; ‘I will tell you what your mother ought to have taught you. I know the world—don’t tell any one what you have told me. I

know you didn't mean any harm,' he added, as he met Jonquille's honest, fearless eyes; 'but you would give people a bad impression of yourself.'

'A bad impression!' she repeated, lifting her head proudly, though a fiery blush mounted into her cheeks. 'Who would get a bad impression, and why? I am not doing any harm. None of our lads would touch me with the tip of his finger any more than if I were a plaster saint in a niche. The world may think what it likes; I care as little for it as that,' and with her foot she rolled a pebble contemptuously into the river.

'You are wrong,' rejoined Manuel, more energetically than before, as if he felt strongly about this. 'Your friends ought to warn you.'

'The daughter of Mother Salomé has no friends,' she answered coldly. 'Besides, I can do very well without them. But you are not listening to me,' she added, turning round abruptly to Manuel. He shrugged his shoulders.

'I can't help listening,' he said.

She looked at him with a strange smile.

'You will be able to listen to me better this evening,' she said.

The ironworks of Moron were now in sight.

As they drew near a small cottage by the roadside a large dog, dragging its heavy chain, rushed barking at them. Jonquille knew the beast, and was quite aware that its bark was worse than its bite, but wishing to test her companion's courage, she seized Manuel's arm and looked at him with wide-open eyes, full of feigned terror.

'Stand behind me,' said Manuel.

When the dog made a spring at him he quietly bent down and seized him by the collar, and, in spite of the desperate struggles of the animal, which seemed nearly choked, he dragged it ignominiously to its kennel and fastened its chain at a short length to a hook in the wall, so as to leave the culprit in an uncomfortable position; then he contemptuously threw it a crust of bread from his pocket and went back to Jonquille.

'That is a nasty beast,' he said quietly.

'You have made its chain too short,' she answered. 'It's cruel; he will strangle himself.'

And without giving her companion time to stop her she ran to the dog, whose foaming jaws did not look reassuring, and pulling at the chain with both hands, she managed to get the ring off the hook.

‘If I let the dog go he will jump on you,’ she said, looking at Manuel.

He only shrugged his shoulders. Jonquille looked at him for a moment, nodded her approval, and then refastened the chain on the hook, but giving it a greater length than before. Then she returned to the young man.

‘You are no coward,’ she said.

‘Nor you either,’ he answered.

A few minutes later they were on their way home to Chatelot.

Jonquille had several strings to her bow. When she chose she could soften her imperious ways ; her voice could have liquid tones ; her lips give something like the tender smile which was reserved for Pierre only. She now used her charms on Manuel, and succeeded in making him talk. Bit by bit he told her about his troubles. Sometimes he would stop as if surprised to find himself talking so freely, and then she would encourage him to go on by a gesture or questioning look.

‘So you seem to find life rather dull sometimes,’ she said in a low tone with surprise ; ‘I never find it dull.’

‘That’s not wonderful,’ the young man said,

shrugging his shoulders. 'You are free, and can be out of doors as much as you like. But you don't know how lucky you are. If you could only be shut up for a week in a stuffy factory, with the smell of rancid oil in your nose, and the noise of machinery vibrating in your ears, till you felt as if a mill was going round in your head.'

He paused as he remembered the appearance of the factory girls as they came out of the workshops; some merely vulgar, others brazen-looking, others shamefaced and timid, hiding behind their companions, to escape the bold looks and jokes of the workmen. He thought of the gossip that passed round in working-hours, of the nicknames given to the poor girls, of notes he had himself received. He turned towards Jonquille with a masterful, almost violent gesture, and exclaimed—

'Never go there; never put your foot inside a factory; you had better eat dry bread and drink only water all your life.'

'How odd you are,' she said. 'Why, I never thought of going into a factory! what an idea!'

Manuel already regretted his words. In his

solitary life he had got into the habit of giving vent to any agitating thoughts in violent exclamations and broken sentences. Jonquille found his conversation very disconnected, but in spite of that she was interested in it, and had already read off two or three pages of the scrawled manuscript of Manuel's character. She went home quite convinced that he would make an excellent smuggler. She told this to Firmin, but he only seemed half pleased. On the other hand, Constant Loison was delighted at the news.

'I knew it,' he said; 'but your opinion will have more weight than mine. Oh, my dear, you are as clever as you are beautiful!'

'Be quiet; that's enough,' she said, turning her back on him.

Dinner was now ready, and the whole band trooped into the low room, asking loudly for Jonquille to come and wait on them. But she never appeared; she was not lavish of her favours, and often went away when her presence was most desired. She dined with Pierre, and spent all the afternoon either in the kitchen, where Mother Salomé would not allow her daughter to be plagued, or in her brother's

room, mending clothes more skilfully than might have been expected.

Manuel found the afternoon long. He was coldly received by the others, in spite of all Constant Loison's efforts to establish friendly relations between the old set and the newcomer. He was nearly going off two or three times, but how could he leave without saying good-bye to Jonquille? He wandered round the house, and near the garden, and at last followed a narrow path leading out of the gorge, and sat down on some rugged broken steps cut in the rock above the river, which connected the upper with the lower path. He remained there a long time, his elbow on his knee, and his chin resting on his hand. The maiden-hair fern was hanging in delicate fringes from all the steps of the rock, and bluebells were nodding their heads on their delicate stalks. A little shy lizard, seeing this motionless figure, first hesitated, then ventured to glide quietly on to a flat stone as broad as one's hand, to take its siesta there after the Italian fashion.

The river below ran gently between the banks, which opened wider here to allow its waters space to spread their waves, edged with creamy

foam. Sometimes a swift, capricious wave would wet a pebble or a tuft of grass which the next wave would disdain to touch, but would instead rush ambitiously up a small rock and fall in a miniature cascade; a third wave would press onward, pursuing a butterfly which hovered over the stream. But the next wave would again wet the pebble, which was already dried by the sun; the same gambols would follow one another, and the clear river went on gleaming and sparkling, speeding ever onward and singing its monotonous chant.

There is a mysterious charm and fascination in running water; we cannot help watching it and wondering where this wave will break, and then the next, and the one after, and while we watch we can think of nothing: thought becomes reverie, and the mind refuses to fix itself on any subject while the water is gliding and leaping below us. If you try to tear yourself away from this strange fascination, the white witch dashes a handful of glistening foam in your eyes and vanishes in a rainbow; then she arches her white neck like a swan, or appears clear as crystal; now she is angry, now she smiles; she murmurs and whispers softly till she has again bound you

to her side with fresh enchantments. Manuel at length covered his eyes with his hand to try to collect his thoughts which wandered down the running stream. He was by nature more impulsive than reflective; he was not given to weighing reasons or testing motives. Hitherto he had always followed his first impulse, and as he was good-hearted and right-minded, this had generally led to no bad results. He was not one of those undecided people who are always saying, 'I have not made up my mind!' He formed resolutions suddenly, and kept them. Eager in all his desires, he did not need to question himself long to know what he should like to do. For ten years he had had but one wish—to be free. Now the door of his prison was ajar, he had but to say a word and it would stand wide open, and he could go forth freely into a new life outside. But some scruples still kept him back.

Manuel, though intelligent, had not received much education, and the primary school, in teaching him to read, had bestowed rather a useless gift, for since the day he had left school he had hardly opened a book except his hymn-book when he went to church. Now and then in winter he looked at a newspaper in spare

moments, and would read the article on Meteorology, to see what weather was predicted for the coming month ; or he glanced at the list of candidates, to see for whom he must vote. In his solitary walks the magpies and jays were the only creatures he met who could possibly talk, and they did not discuss politics. And thus he knew nothing about social questions, not even the affairs of the country, the altering of taxes, or the revision of the Constitution.

He had never thought about free trade, or even heard discussed the intricate subject of protection and Custom-House duties. Firmin Mitou's logic had appeared to him sound, and he came to the same conclusions after reflecting on the matter.

‘Upon my word, it is helping poor people to give them tobacco and sugar at a fairer price. Where does the money raised by taxes go? Into the Government's pocket, I suppose, and poor people don't put their hands into that. We must help each other, and I am quite willing to fill the snuff-box of Firmin Mitou's grandfather, even if I must walk fifteen miles to do it. If I pay the merchant I don't defraud any one ; on the contrary, I encourage commerce,

which is not so very flourishing, and I am ready to risk my life in this calling.'

Many people reason after this fashion, and even those who boast that they are logical are inclined to think that where there is courage, there they are sure to keep honour untarnished. Manuel, who was an ignorant fellow, may be forgiven for adapting this false reasoning to his own case.

The sun was now setting and the long shadows were filling the gorge, which grew cold and gloomy. Manuel, benumbed by sitting in one posture, got up, and was walking back to the inn when a tall, spare form was seen coming between the trees to meet him. It was Constant, who had grown uneasy at Manuel's long absence, and feared he had gone home quietly without saying a word to any one.

'Here you are at last!' he cried, 'brooding all alone; well, what have you decided?'

'I am ready to join the band,' said Manuel in a firm voice; 'I like that better than exile. I don't see any crime or fraud in it. If the Government does not approve, so much the worse for it. There are risks of course, but I prefer a short and merry life to a long one dragged

out for eighty years, and then perhaps to die of dulness at last.'

He said this resolutely, with his head erect, and his eyes sparkling with fire and energy. But as he ended his voice suddenly dropped. He seemed to have been pronouncing his own doom; he felt a sharp pang, and a strange foreboding pierced his heart like a keen, cold blade of steel. He held his breath as if listening to the echo of his own words; but it was too late to recall them.

The ravine was now quite dark; while Manuel's last word was uttered the sun sank behind the lofty cliffs crowned with fir-trees, and the young man stood mute, bending his head as a mysterious fear smote him.

'If I am doing wrong, may God forgive me; I know so little, and I can't see far before me,' he muttered slowly.

Then leaving Constant behind he strode rapidly down to the inn.

CHAPTER III

THE lamps were already lit in the low parlour where Mother Salomé was laying the table, while the smugglers were playing at cards or smoking. They had rejoiced when they saw Manuel go off, thinking that the fellow who had excited their jealousy and suspicion had given up all idea of joining them, and they could hardly conceal their displeasure at his return. An hour before Manuel might have resented this treatment and turned his back on them; but now that he had made up his mind he was prepared to take all the consequences, and ready to face and overcome any obstacles which should arise. He entered the room holding his head high, and without noticing the black looks cast on him, walked to the farther end, and leaned his back against the window with such a resolute air that no one dared to pick a quarrel with him.

Supper being ready every one sat down. Manuel, instead of seating himself near Constant as if under his patronage, chose to place himself between the two smugglers who had seemed least well disposed towards him. He did not speak during the whole meal, but his determined air said a great deal. The night was dark, and as the last gleams of light died away the noise of the weir seemed to grow louder, the dull roar swelled at times like an angry voice, then sank in a prolonged groan; one might have thought that a troop of souls in purgatory were passing through the gorge, as a confused murmur of wings was heard brushing by, then a sound of sobs, till they vanished in the darkness.

Manuel listened much more to this melancholy music than to the noisy conversation of his companions; he tried to find articulate sounds in the monotonous murmur of the stream; he fancied he heard sudden exclamations, wild cries, ill-omened whispers, as if one wave were telling another of some wicked deed.

This chant, always the same, yet always different, fascinated Manuel's ears just as the play of the waves had fascinated his eyes. By dint of listening he thought that he heard his

name in each plaintive sound, as if each spirit passing beneath the window murmured Manuel ! Manuel ! Then the voice became louder and more imperious ; it came in great gusts of sound broken by sobs, and all the waves surging over the dam and falling together seemed to moan Manuel ! Manuel ! The young man remained riveted to his seat, tightly clasping his knees with both hands, his eyes were fixed, and he felt a strange hallucination overmastering him. By a violent effort he roused himself from the paralyzing influence. He sat up and drank off his glass at a draught, then turning, was going to speak to his neighbour when the door opened and Jonquille appeared. She was greeted with loud cries of delight.

‘Here you are at last ! that is right ; you left us alone all day, Jonquille ; come and sit here —no, here, at the top of the table.’

She answered nothing, but began helping her mother to clear away. When there was nothing left on the table but some bottles and glasses, Jonquille sat down at a little distance from the smugglers, while Mother Salomé stood on the threshold. The young men all got up with one accord and grouped themselves in a semi-

circle round Jonquille, who said in her clear voice—

‘All day long you have been eating and drinking and playing skittles; it is time now to think of business. Who will begin?’

‘I,’ said Firmin Mitou, coming forward; ‘I propose that we settle about this new comrade.’

Then he sat down.

‘Quite right,’ answered Constant. ‘I propose that he should be enlisted, and I will be his godfather and surety. If any of you has anything to say against it let him speak out.’

‘We don’t know him at all,’ said one of the men, throwing a suspicious look at Manuel.

‘I know him well enough,’ answered Constant.

‘There are enough of us already.’

‘On the contrary, we have not lads enough for the work.’

‘Say at once that you lay down the law for us,’ grumbled Firmin; ‘it is all a sham, pretending to consult us.’

‘Not at all; and to show you that I am seeking the good of all, I will leave the decision to Jonquille.’

There was a moment’s silence; all eyes were

turned to the young girl who, bending forward, her chin resting on her hand, seemed with her keen eyes to read the inmost thoughts of the faces turned towards her. A lamp with a large shade hung just above her, and she sat in the full glare of its yellow light, while the smugglers round her were left in shadow. In this bright circle, edged with darkness, her little brown head, with the hair curling naturally about her neck, stood out in strong relief; the loosely-knotted, amber-coloured kerchief glowed in the light, and the outline of the still childish, supple figure was clearly seen. All the vulgar details of an ordinary inn parlour disappeared from sight,—Jonquille alone—Jonquille, with her thoughtful eyes and her form bending forward, with its strange charm, and surrounded by this yellow light, which appeared like a mystic aureole,—Jonquille alone was the picture which met the eye. After a moment's silence she turned to Manuel.

‘Come here,’ she said curtly.

He stood up, but without approaching her. A sort of respectful fear prevented his setting foot in the luminous circle which surrounded her.

‘Come nearer,’ she added.

He obeyed, and stood in front of her in the full light of the lamp which revealed every line in his face.

‘Before we admit you, we must make certain that you wish to join us. Do you, or do you not wish to become a member of the band?’

‘I do,’ he answered resolutely.

‘And you ask me to admit you?’

‘I do,’ he answered again.

She was evidently the queen and leader; she looked at him with such a calm, imperious glance, that he never for a moment hesitated in yielding submission to her. As she was the recognised chief, it seemed the right thing for him to obey. But all at once their morning’s talk came back to his mind, and he blushed at the memory. Jonquille, as if the same thought had struck her, gave him a haughty and triumphant look.

‘Very well,’ she said, ‘you are now enlisted among us. To-night you will be tested; we don’t trouble about long ceremonies. There is no oath to take, for honest men don’t require to be bound by that, and traitors perjure themselves as easily as they swallow a draught of water. Come lads, shake hands with Manuel Vincent, and take him as a comrade and friend.’

Firmin Mitou unwillingly stretched out his hand to Manuel, but the latter answered, 'Wait till to-morrow; you will then know whether I deserve the honour of being your comrade.'

'I shouldn't mind waiting a year,' said Firmin in a grumbling tone.

The others all thrust their hands hurriedly into their pockets, delighted to be spared a little longer giving the welcome which Jonquille demanded for the newcomer. Every one went back to his seat, and the details of the next expedition were discussed and arranged.

Manuel was in an absent mood. As he had as yet no voice in the discussion, he did not pay much attention to it; all he thought of was that now he was free, and his heart beat fast with joy, as he realised that the past was past indeed, and the great leap taken into a new life; it was a leap in the dark, but Manuel felt no fear; nothing but a wild joy, an intoxicating happiness, and a confused sense of triumph filled his brain; he restrained himself, but inwardly he was singing a hymn of thanksgiving for his deliverance.

'Everything is now arranged!' cried Constant, 'so give us a song, Jonquille.'

She got up at once, without a word, and

without waiting to be asked again. The men who had been talking stopped, without waiting to finish a sentence ; and those who were going to drink put down their glasses softly on the table without raising them to their lips—a profound silence fell on them all. Jonquille stood with one hand on the back of her chair, the other resting on her hip, and with a careless gesture, which was natural to her and not the least affected, she threw back her curls and began. It was a quaint song, sung in a minor key to a half-improvised air, which was well suited to the dreamy words of love and longing—

‘ My heart would seek my love,
Fly to her, fly, white dove,
Bear her from me a flower,
A leaf from my sad bower,
Tell her my poor heart grieves,
And wet with tears these leaves,
Tell her my plaint, white dove,
Tell it, my own sweet love.’

It was just an artless lamentation, and Jonquille’s voice was quite uncultivated, but it had remarkably clear, metallic, high notes, and soft, rich low notes like an organ ; between the extremes

her voice had some indifferent tones which she, with her love of contrast, skilfully avoided. The irregular music of the ballad, unhindered by rules of time and harmony, was exactly suited to Jonquille's voice. Now she quickened the rhythm and now slackened it, as she chose ; she repeated the leading phrase of the melody with every variety of expression, sometimes soaring up in a clear, high note, and again giving a long, drawn-out tone like a wail. Then the touching melody came back, and the music seemed to hover for a moment and then die away in a long note that lingered on the lips of the singer and then floated away, while she seemed to follow it with eye and gesture till, like the last vibration of a crystal vase, it ceased ; yet no one could say the exact moment when the voice was silent. Manuel, bending towards Jonquille, drunk in the music which moved him strangely.

‘Encore,’ he said in a low voice when the last echo had died away.

‘Encore, encore !’ cried the others ; ‘Jonquille, give us again the song of the white pigeon.’

But she shook her head.

‘Another time, I am tired,’ she said, and she sat down with her hands folded on her knees and

a dreamy look in her eyes. While she sang she had given herself up entirely to the tumult of feeling which the song roused in her, and which was too vague and undefined for words.

After a few minutes she roused herself and stood up again to sing, and without any preamble began the following old-fashioned song, one of those ballads which are out of date now—

‘ Michael came courting Christine one day ;
Ah ha ! Ah ha ! He went courting away,
’Twas Christmas-tide.’

The words were nothing and the music was everything, yet Jonquille contrived to throw such charm into the commonplace words of the song, the mocking ‘ Ah ha ! ’ was so fresh and ringing, and she enjoyed the song herself so much, that her gaiety soon became infectious. As soon as the mocking ‘ Ah ha ! ’ began, every one threw himself back in his chair with peals of laughter.

How well Jonquille contrived to bring out the little drama of the song ; she put so much expression into the music, the gestures, and the words, and when she came to the catastrophe, she lingered on the notes, and sang the lover’s shocking fate in a solemn voice—

‘ But she sent him off with mocking and laughter,
And he was so mad he jumped into the water.’

Then after a pause of horror, she suddenly raised her head and smiling, sang in a gay, clear voice—

‘ And would have died,
But they fished him out with a hook and pole.’

No words can give the effect of the music, but Jonquille’s hearers, who had heard her sing it fifty times before, always waited impatiently for the well-known passage. You might have read on their faces every shade of feeling raised by Jonquille; their lips moved, noiselessly following the words; they knew that this tragic story had a happy ending, and yet, when Jonquille, after keeping them in suspense, deigned to let them know that Michael was fished out of the water, they showed the relief it gave their feelings in a loud burst of laughter. They were certainly an audience easily moved, but even more critical listeners might have been gratified by Jonquille’s unstudied gestures and effects, and pure, flexible voice.

Then putting her fingers to her lips to ask for silence, she sang, with a little toss of her head—

‘ He had lost his heart, but he found it whole
And his wits beside.
For the icy bath had cooled his ardour ;
His love was gone, his heart grown harder.
“ I’m cured,” he cried.’

The lads winked at each other now, for they
knew what was coming—

‘ But when *he* grew cold then *she* grew hot
And changed her mind ;
While he waxed ruddy and stouter got,
She paled and pined.’

Then with a little mischievous smile she continued—

‘ The ruddier *he*, the paler *she*,
For love forlorn,
Now nobody comes my lover to be,
Oh ! sad, sad morn.’

The whole band could not help joining in and humming the air. But now Jonquille, with the dramatic instinct which Nature has given to all women, hastened to the conclusion—

‘ Michael at last by pity was moved,
He could not see the girl he loved
Grow thin and die.
He woo’d her again, ’twas Easter-tide,
And now she’s a blushing, bonny bride ;
Oh, tell me why
Lovers are fools, now hot now cold ? ’

And here the smugglers felt that the moment had come to give vent to their enthusiasm by joining in the chorus which was on the tips of their tongues—

‘Oh, tell me why
Lovers are fools, now hot now cold?
When lasses are coy, then lads grow bold,
Oh, tell me why?’

How many times, indeed, had they not asked the same question and laughed over it? Jonquille sang them this song at least once a week, and they were never tired of it.

Manuel also was laughing like a boy; he did not care to check himself, but allowed the young enchantress to bring before him visions now sad, now wild, now comic, now pathetic, as the fancy took her. His nature, though not easily mastered by force, was fresh and open to new impressions, and had surrendered to the charmer: the subtle magic power of song had conquered him. There was only one thing he longed for—to hear this voice again.

Jonquille got up from her seat, and picking up the two corners of her apron, went and stood before Constant Loison, with her head turned aside.

‘For Pierre,’ she said shortly.

Two five-franc pieces at once fell jingling into her apron.

‘That is too much,’ said Jonquille, putting one piece back into the too generous donor’s hand.

Constant pretended to refuse it, but at last slipped it into his pocket.

Manuel frowned. ‘Was it then for the sake of money that she sang so well?’

Jonquille went round to each of the smugglers in turn, but always turned her head aside, as if she did not care to observe how much coin fell into her apron.

She always repeated the words ‘For Pierre,’ but she never said ‘Thank you.’ This tithe seemed to be her due; and no princess accepting some offering from her humble subjects ever showed greater pride. In accepting or rather claiming this she seemed to be giving instead of receiving a favour. When she was drawing near Manuel, he pulled out of his pocket a tiny piece of silver—only half a franc: it was all he had till pay-day came round. He turned it about in his fingers, angry at his poverty; as Jonquille sold her songs he

would have liked to pay her in royal fashion, and to have the right to humble the pride of this singer, and to break the spell against which he was already rebelling. But half a franc — she would think him stingy! All the while she was coming nearer. At last, ashamed and angry that he was so penniless, he abruptly offered his small bit of silver.

‘I don’t want anything from you,’ she said, without even glancing to see whether it was a sou or a five-franc piece, and she passed on.

Manuel’s first impulse was to get up, to run after her, to force her to take his money. But half a franc—she would laugh at him. So he remained riveted to his chair, feeling humiliated and powerless in his anger.

Jonquille finished her collection, and emptied her apron into a little basket which stood on the table. Her mother, still standing on the threshold, watched her movements with a covetous eye.

‘You have got a nice little sum,’ she whispered, bending down to her daughter. ‘*You* can earn money with little trouble.’

‘Do you think so,’ said Jonquille bitterly :

‘I would rather hoe potatoes than beg like this — But it is for Pierre,’ she added in a low voice.

‘What does she do with all that money?’ asked Manuel roughly, turning to his neighbour.

‘Oh, she spends it all on her brother. Why, fancy, the doctor charges five francs to come here! and he often comes, not that he can do the poor lad much good, but it eases her mind. Then there’s medicine to be got for him, and oranges, and books; and they say that Mother Salomé makes Jonquille pay for every chicken she roasts for him. He never lacks anything, and is nursed like a prince, but the money flies. Did you really suppose that Jonquille was saving up for herself?’

Manuel was prevented answering, for Constant stood up and pulled out his watch, saying in a solemn voice: ‘It is time to start.’

Every one rose and drank a last glass.

‘Come, Jonquille,’ they said, ‘give us our song,’ and she began Beranger’s verses, which the artist, her godfather, had once taught her—

‘Midnight has struck, come boys be steady,
Follow me, bales and pack-mules are ready,

Tread with sure foot, of ambush beware,
Pistols be loaded, guns let us bear ;
Custom-House men muster around,
Bullets are cheap and aim can be found.'

While the whole band joined in a chorus,
Manuel was struck by the threatening looks on
their faces seen in the dim light ; their eyes
sparkled in the gloom. Jonquille went on—

'Brave are we, comrades, merry and bold.
Gladly our sweethearts handle the gold,
The while we recount adventures of daring
And plunder and fame that every man's sharing.'

Here her eyes met Manuel's, and she grew
a fiery red, but lifted her head proudly and
sang in a still clearer voice—

'Oh little we care for rain and snow,
But up the mountains we climbing go
Till the frontier crossed we dare to sleep
Lulled by the torrent so wild and deep.'

And here the voices of the smugglers joined
in, more loud than tuneful, but ringing out with
wild energy, filling the room with their savage,
defiant music—

'Let guards on the frontier all beware ;
We are the winners of hearts and coin ;
The lasses love us, we've choice of fair,
And the lads are all agog to join.'

The wave of enthusiasm carried Manuel along with it. He joined in the chorus with all his strength, beating time with his foot and impatient to be off. Jonquille's voice penetrated his very marrow.

'They are worked up to a fine pitch now,' thought Constant. 'That girl's voice is better than champagne; it excites their heads without making their legs unsteady,' then he added aloud, 'Come boys—time to start—lade the pack-mules, as the song says.'

Mother Salomé, pulling a key out of her pocket, opened a dark cupboard, where several boxes were piled one upon another. Constant looked with fond care at these goods, which belonged to him, and were going to be exposed to a thousand risks. He felt them and made sure that the lids were properly fastened, then he gazed at them silently, as if he were mentally wishing them a safe journey.

'Be prudent, boys,' he said at last; 'and if they try to stop you, fight like lions. Ah! if it were not for this wretched leg, I would go too.'

If he had been able he would really have started, for his anxieties as trader now overpowered his instinct of self-preservation. Manuel

lifted a box on to his shoulder, and found it no weight for him.

‘You will not say so in half an hour,’ said Firmin.

The merchandise consisted of watches and tobacco. Each smuggler fastened his burden on with a strap which could be undone in a moment in case it was necessary to fly and leave the baggage behind. Each one took also a stout stick, long and knotty, and shod with a sharp iron point, and a loaded pistol, which was slung like a travelling flask. Manuel alone had no firearms.

‘Never mind ; we are not likely to want them to-night ; it isn’t often we exchange shots,’ said Firmin. ‘To-morrow we’ll get you a weapon, at your own cost, of course, but to-night a cudgel will be enough.’

Constant examined the men carefully, buckling a strap here, and looking at a stick there.

‘Are you sure,’ said he, feeling the pistols with respectful prudence, ‘that they are not at full cock ? Take care of that. An accident happens so easily ; you give a knock, and the pistol goes off, and the shot lodges in your legs or your neighbour’s, and then he rolls

down the river with his bale. Come, are you all ready? Where is Jonquille?’

She had gone upstairs to say good-bye to Pierre and to lock up the money she had earned. She knew very well that her mother would not scruple to take some of it if she left it to her tender care. She soon came down with a shawl wrapped round her head and shoulders; they were waiting for her in the yard, and as soon as she appeared, a silent procession was formed which, passing round the garden, went down towards the river. There was one spot where the eddy from the river was less felt and allowed of a ferry, and here a large boat was fastened to a great iron nail in the rock. The night was dark, but the blue-black sky was studded with stars, which the rippling water reflected here and there and seemed to bear away on its stream. Jonquille’s lithe figure could just be distinguished as she stood up in the centre of the boat while her passengers were all seated. She felt for the moorings with both hands, unfastened the chain and took hold of the oars. Great rocks stood out of the water, though it was deep here, but Jonquille seemed to guess where they were in the darkness, and with a

stroke of her oar kept off them. In three minutes they had reached the other side. The smugglers landed quietly; and as they passed by Jonquille she bid them good-bye with a gesture; but when Manuel, who was the last, went by, she bent towards him and whispered, 'Keep up your spirits, and good luck to you.'

'Thank you,' he answered in a low voice.

Jonquille, left alone, sat in the boat watching the long, dark procession by the riverside disappearing in the gloom.

'In an hour's time,' she thought, 'if the top of the ravine is not guarded, they won't want me any longer.'

Sometimes, when they found themselves observed, they fell back in good order on the river and got into the boat which was waiting for them.

Jonquille feared neither solitude nor darkness; at the least alarm she could push off into deep water; but what need she be afraid of on this lonely shore where only smugglers came? Lying back on the seat in a careless attitude and letting her hand dip in the water, which flowed through her fingers, she watched the stars, the sombre outline of the cliffs, and the rippling water. She loved these lonely hours,

this complete liberty. Her thoughts were not fixed on anything, but she let vague memories float through her mind; without caring to define them, she allowed them idly to pass as in a mist, and to join themselves to still vaguer ideas—her visions of the future.

How deep and mysterious the water seemed. The stars were clearly reflected on the dark surface of the quiet bay.

Jonquille remembered how one evening, when she was a little girl, she refused to believe that the two lamps, which were burning peacefully in the bed of the stream, were only reflections of the lights which shone each night in the sky above. She had seized an oar to try ‘and fish up the stars,’ and had only succeeded in quenching them in the troubled waters. She smiled now at her childish fancy, and yet, without thinking, she stretched out her hand towards the bright reflection.

Jonquille was very ignorant; she often wondered what kept the stars up there, and seeing falling stars sometimes on clear August nights, she thought that some accident had shaken out the nail from which hung the little lamp.

‘If I were only just under it where it falls with my apron spread out, I would catch it quite gently and not let it go out. What does a star look like when you see it close? Perhaps if one went straight to Paradise, as the priests and good Sisters of Charity do, one might come across the stars on one’s way thither; but smugglers are obliged to go to purgatory, and even to stay there a long time, I am told.’

Her thoughts naturally passed on to Manuel Vincent. Would he find the kind of life he wanted among the smugglers? Would he not find that even smuggling, with its risks and its adventures by night, had also its monotonous routine of work? Perhaps he might be disappointed with it and go back some day to the old workshop. ‘But he won’t find any one there to sing to him as I do,’ thought Jonquille proudly. She began gently to hum a song, with her chin resting on her hand, and her eyes still fixed on the little dark bay where the stars sparkled in the water. The artist had taught her a number of songs, chiefly those by Beranger, and these songs which she had learnt were her prayer-book and her treasury of knowledge. In them she had found all sorts of suggestive ideas.

which her little imaginative brain had developed after her own fashion. Her poet having taught her that

Our star
Rules our destiny and shines in the sky,

and that falling stars are lives whose light is quenched, Jonquille had built a little theory of her own on this foundation. Seeking for the star which ruled her destiny she had found it in the dancing, fitful, and yet faithful light which was reflected each night in the river, near the shore. Its bluish light, which was like that of a will-o'-the-wisp, was blended with all Jonquille's memories, with all the strange adventures by night which formed a large part of her strange life. Another star, brighter, and with a less twinkling, more steadfast light, was a planet. Jonquille, who understood nothing about the motions of the heavenly bodies, was surprised to see it gradually wander farther from her star, disappear at last, and yet always return after a time to its companion. Instinctively she felt that it represented to her all those who, for a time, had mingled in her life. Now she liked to fancy that it was Manuel's special star. He would do as others had done, travel by her side

a little while across this mysterious bay which represented her life, then he would pass beyond to travel down the unknown river.

Suddenly a shadow crossed the water, and Manuel's star seemed to quiver and then disappear. Jonquille raised her eyes, trembling, and saw a little cloud, like a gray network spread in the sky above her head; and the sparkling light of sky and water were hidden by this veil of cloud.

'Something has happened to *him*,' whispered Jonquille to herself, seizing the oars to be ready to row at once and give help if it were needed.

The curfew bell from the neighbouring village just then rang out suddenly, and the waves of vibrating air were felt rather than heard above the noise of the weir, and made Jonquille shiver while she listened.

'It is quite an hour since they started,' she said to herself; 'they will have got over the worst part of the road. Am I going to get into a fright about a lad whom I don't know from Adam or Eve, and who is quite capable of taking care of himself? If the star went out it was because there was no more oil; it has gone to bed; and that's what I shall do too.'

Then stooping over the edge of the boat, she kissed her hand to her own steadfast star, which had not been hidden by the cloud, and which would continue to sparkle and tremble in the water till dawn, like a timid bather in the rippling waves. A moment after Jonquille was fastening her boat to the shore and was climbing with light step up to the house.

There was a lamp burning behind the little window of the kitchen, but the upper floor was dark. The young girl hastily pushed the half-open door, and found Constant Loison waiting in the passage, with his hat on his head; he was drawing patterns on the flags with his stick, while Mother Salomé seemed to watch his evident impatience with amusement.

With her claw-like hand she was shading her eyes from the yellow, flickering light of a little lamp hanging on the wall, with a copper reflector behind it; she did this less to protect herself from the glare than to be able to watch her late lingering guest at her ease. For the last half hour he had been walking up and down the passage and could not make up his mind to go.

‘At last,’ he said, when he saw Jonquille appear. He put his hand on her shoulder in

his eagerness, but she shook him off roughly. 'What were you about—all alone down there? If I could have got another boat I would have come to join you.'

'You would have spoilt my pleasure,' she answered, trying to pass behind him and to reach the staircase. But he blocked her way with his outstretched arms.

'Your pleasure? What do you mean? Weren't you alone?'

'Of course I was; but I like that; better be alone than in bad company. Good-night, Mr. Loison; a safe journey to you. My mother and I are going to bed.'

'Ah! Jonquille, you naughty girl,' sighed Constant, 'have you no heart?'

'Not a scrap.'

'Give me a kind, affectionate word; it will be the first to-day.'

'I have already wished you good-night.'

'But think what a long way home it is, and alone on such a dark night.'

'That's true. Mother, lend him our lantern.'

'I shall return in a few days, Jonquille.'

'You must go home before you can return. Good-night, Mr. Loison, good-night.'

She laughed and showed her white teeth between her ruddy lips; she was leaning against the old wall, with her two hands clasped behind her head, and looked provokingly pretty and saucy; she was so young and graceful and piquant, and withal had just a touch of untamed wildness about her—all which made Constant feel that he was completely losing his senses. The wide sleeves of her linen jacket, open to the elbow, showed her firm, round arms, bronzed by exposure, and Jonquille's head leant against them in a sleepy attitude; indeed, she pretended to be falling asleep as she stood there, and Constant vainly tried to keep up the conversation.

‘Jonquille, if you would only listen to me.’

But at last she got really impatient, and letting her arms fall, looked at him angrily.

‘But that is just what I won't do,’ she said. ‘It's not the thing——’ and here she suddenly slipped past him, and with two bounds was up the stairs. A door was softly opened, then closed, and the key turned in the lock. The discomfited lover turned sharply to the mother.

‘Is this the way you promised to help me?’ he said roughly. ‘Couldn't you put in a word

for me, instead of standing out there like an old stick?’

Mother Salomé was not pleased with this comparison, and frowned, but she swallowed the affront silently; the only person she allowed herself to abuse was her daughter, for she knew that there were a hundred other more efficacious ways of punishing the people who annoyed her. Mother Salomé had no great weakness for Constant; remembering her young days she still retained a preference for handsome lads, and Jonquille’s admirer certainly could not claim to be classed as one of these. But he was well off; that was in his favour. It’s true that he was not lavish with his money, but perhaps that was as well—that is, for a husband; but for a sweetheart—no, it was quite a mistake. Still she could not send him away altogether.

‘The child is tired,’ said the hostess. ‘She has been trotting about all day, and I don’t care to have her rest cut short when she has well earned it. But she likes you, Mr. Constant; don’t be vexed about it; these young creatures have their whims. It was only the other day she was speaking up for you.’

‘Indeed, Mother Salomé; tell me what it was.’

‘Well, I said to her, “His moustache is red;” “Red,” said she; “how can you say that; it’s as scarlet as a lobster!—that’s what it is!”’

Constant involuntarily felt for the moustache which was his pride, and said in a low voice, ‘So you call that speaking up for me?’

‘Ha! my boy,’ thought Mother Salomé, ‘I have paid you out now for your old stick; a lobster’s as good as that.’

‘Don’t trouble yourself—don’t trouble yourself,’ she repeated, pushing him gently towards the door. ‘If the child takes a fancy to you, she will soon find out that you are handsome; they say that love is blind. Good-night, good-night; remember me kindly to your people—— Take care where you step; an accident comes quicker than a legacy. A man was almost killed near the ironworks, where the path has given way, and last night only I dreamt of cats and wet sheets. Now, then, good-bye.’

Having cheered him up with these words she shut the door upon him, bolted it, and put out the lamp at once, for oil is dear, and one can feel one’s way to bed in the dark. Then seeing by a ray of light, which fell on the garden fence, that Jonquille’s candle was still burning, Mother

Salomé took a stick and knocked three times on the ceiling by way of curfew. The light was at once put out, and the lonely house in that wild gorge slept peacefully to the noise of the rushing waters.

CHAPTER IV

IT must be confessed that Jonquille had thought more of Manuel on that evening than Manuel of Jonquille. While she, sitting quietly in the boat, had been anxious about the risks he ran, he was slowly following the party, which advanced in single file, and was quite absorbed by the dangers of the path, and by an ardent desire to prove himself worthy in this first trial. The rocky ravine up which he was climbing was as steep as a roof, rugged and choked with shrubs and climbing plants, and had a cleft in it where the bare rock was exposed. Each man, bending under his load, put his foot carefully on the uneven step just quitted by another foot, and leaning on his stick hoisted himself to a higher shelf of rock. They went slowly and noiselessly up the zigzag. Their guide knew by heart every peril of this giddy ladder—he knew where the surest

footholds were, and went from right to left guiding surely and without hesitation the silent band which followed in his steps.

At the end of ten minutes the word to halt was given in a low whisper, which passed from one to another, and each one stopped short, driving his stick into the ground. Manuel was not sorry to pause and take breath : excitement made his heart beat, and his breath was shorter than usual. Taking off his hat he wiped his moist forehead with the back of his hand. The night was cool and the air fresh, but it was a steep climb, and had required great exertion ; the tension on the muscles of the feet and legs had been doubled by the precarious footing, and by the rolling stones and the narrow footholds which obliged the climber to use all his power and skill. Manuel did not observe that his motionless companions all turned their faces towards the mountain side, and leaning on his stick he bent forward to look back on the path he had left behind. On the right and left the outlines of the rocks were clearly marked ; they were crowned by shrubs whose interlaced boughs made a black, intricate tracing. Down below the dark, funnel-shaped ravine grew narrower, and at the very

bottom ran the black, sinister-looking, wild waters, sparkling here and there. Manuel drew back suddenly, feeling sick and blind and dizzy ; he had almost wanted to throw himself down into the abyss. He had usually a steady head, but now he fancied that he stood on the edge of a deep well. It had been a surprise to him to see the wall of the ravine going straight down like a chimney into the river, for the zigzags had deceived him into thinking that he had gone in a different direction. The noise of a pebble, rolling down and rebounding from the rocks, roused him from his stupor. He listened to it as it rattled down faster and faster till the last splash was almost lost in the depth below. ‘Take care how you step, my lad,’ he said to himself, with a slight shiver ; ‘one false step, and you would roll straight down into the water.’

They began their march again in single file. As the path ascended it became more rugged ; there were fewer shrubs, for the surface soil had been carried away, and only bare rock left. By the faint starlight great masses of rock could be seen but only dimly, and the foot could hardly trust to the guidance of the eye. Each projection threw a deep shadow, which exaggerated the

size of the rocky shelves ; and so deceptive was the effect that it made them seem like the steps of a staircase. Manuel no longer looked about him, but leaning towards the bank he concentrated all his attention on the movements of the man in front of him. As generally happens in such cases, the gravity of the situation absorbed all his faculties and drove out fear. His whole being seemed to be taken up in looking with watchful eyes, and stepping with mechanical precision in the footsteps before him. He seemed to have become a machine in his movements, and his very breathing appeared automatic. The strap which fastened his burden was cutting his shoulder, but he never thought of loosening the buckle, so absorbed was he in watching the movements of the man in front of him, and imitating them like a shadow. All at once Firmin, who was behind Manuel, and brought up the rear, began humming a well-known air, 'By Moonlight,' or 'Ah vous dirai-je, Maman ;' and this fragment of song, which showed a mind quite at ease, awoke Manuel from his half-dreamy, half-automatic state. He was ashamed of having been so absorbed in a position of which he had probably exaggerated the danger. He straightened him-

self and looked back resolutely, and this time he was no longer troubled by dizziness.

The word to halt was again passed along the men, and they paused to summon up all their strength for the last bit of work against the collar, which was the stiffest of all. A steep wall forty feet high formed the head of the ravine. Two irregular rocky cornices ran obliquely across it and divided it, as it were, into three stories, each one forming a narrow ledge, which afforded a foothold. A few deeply-hewn steps in the rock would have been enough to make this an easy ascent; but any such well-defined marks would have attracted the attention of the Excisemen, who considered this wall insurmountable, and did not even take the trouble to guard it. The smugglers had only here and there driven some iron cramps into the rock, where they were hidden by tufts of grass, and these cramps afforded a hold to hands and feet by turns.

As the weight of a bale on the back would have made the required aerial gymnastics still more dangerous, each man left his burden at the foot of the rock. The guide climbed first; he had been up this way a hundred times, and in a

moment had reached the lower cornice; now grasping an iron cramp with one hand, he bent down and seized the end of his stick, which was handed up to him, and to which his bale was securely fastened. A second smuggler did the same thing, and then a third. Manuel, who was by nature a climber, and had been to the top of the highest firs, found no difficulty when his turn came. Firmin Mitou, who brought up the rear, handed up his stick to Manuel before going up himself. In less than five minutes all the men were standing together on the cornice, taking breath before ascending the second stair.

Manuel's heart beat fast, but no longer from fear; it was the excitement of danger which made it throb. The young man stood motionless, his forehead leaning against the rock, the muscles of his legs were strained and quivering, his blood flowed faster, he felt distinctly the pulses of his temples beating. His mind was clear, he knew the abyss was behind him, and was coolly calculating the risks before him, and feeling with his hand for some hole where he could rest his foot before reaching the second cramp. A hanging bramble might, he thought, catch in his blouse; he therefore pulled out his

knife, and opened it with his teeth, for he dared not let go the other hand from its hold, and cut off the branch.

‘Come on,’ said the guide in a low voice, and the ascent was again made in the same manner; the orderly movements showing long practice. All at once, when the third smuggler had reached the cornice, and his stick was being handed up to him, the bale, either from being too heavy or badly strapped on, got loose just as the stick was describing a curve through the air over Manuel’s head. The man uttered an oath; all his night’s labour was lost; but Manuel stretched out his arm and caught the bale in the air. This sudden movement made him lose his balance and fall backwards; luckily his left hand still grasped the cramp tenaciously, and his heels were caught by a rough bit of rock. He vibrated for several seconds above the yawning chasm, and then by a vigorous effort of the back and wrist he recovered his upright position. He had not uttered a single cry of terror during this awful moment, but he trembled from head to foot like a tense string which has been struck violently. Having got a sure footing on the cornice he handed the bale to its owner.

‘Much obliged,’ said the latter.

Firmin Mitou growled out a word of approval ; his esteem for the new comrade had grown an ell. Manuel felt extremely proud for a minute, but when he turned towards Firmin, he saw that the latter, just as if he were on the high road, was calmly lighting his pipe, which had gone out, though it had never left its accustomed corner in his mouth. This cool behaviour, which was not bravado, showed Manuel what a gulf there was between his kind of courage and Firmin’s, and it lessened his proud satisfaction.

There was one more stair to mount, one more effort to make, and then men and bales, the one hoisting the other, reached the top of the cliff safe and sound, and found themselves on a grassy plot on the edge of the forest. A flask was handed round, and they then divided into two bands, which for greater safety were to take different paths through the wood, and meet at the neighbouring village.

Manuel and three other smugglers plunged in among the trees ; here it was gloomy and close and stifling. The dim outline of the bushes by the roadside looked like spies crouching down to watch, and every time a dry branch snapped

beneath his feet, Manuel expected to see a figure rise up suddenly to seize him. All at once a cry was heard some thirty yards behind.

‘Hollo ! hollo ! stop !’

‘It’s the Excisemen !’ whispered one of the lads in Manuel’s ear. ‘Run !’

They all began to run, but the cries came nearer.

‘We are done for,’ said the leader of the band, stopping. ‘Down with the bales.’

Each one threw off his burden, while Manuel, indignant at this cowardly flight, fixed his flashing eyes on them.

‘Aren’t you ashamed of yourselves ?’ he said, clenching his teeth. ‘Take up your bales and run away ; *I* will stay and keep off the Excisemen for five minutes.’

He then planted himself in the middle of the path, and whirled his cudgel round his head. A dark figure appeared among the trees calling out ‘Halt !’ in an imperious voice, and then rushed upon Manuel. The latter set himself free with a sudden jerk of the shoulders, and seizing the man by the collar, held him at arm’s length and shook him with all his might.

‘Gently, gently !’ cried the smuggler, bursting into a laugh.

It was Firmin's voice, and Manuel left off shaking him, but still kept a firm grip on his shoulder, and looked suspiciously at him.

'Be quiet, then; let me go!' cried Firmin. 'It was all a sham; do you understand? Before dubbing you a knight, we wanted to see if you would take to your heels in a row; but you stood the trial well. Here are our comrades coming back.'

The three other smugglers now came up laughing. They made fun of Manuel for having been taken in, but they were really pleased with him. In order to make up for lost time they broke into a run, which brought them in less than a quarter of an hour to a hamlet near.

A light was shining behind the ground-floor shutters of a low cottage, which stood a little back from the road, with a small garden in front. A large dog left its kennel, and came without barking to sniff round the legs of the newcomers.

Firmin coughed and scratched the door, which was immediately opened, and the whole band went in.

They found the first detachment of their party already arrived, and sitting in groups in the large badly-lit room, which was half kitchen, half shop.

The master of the house greeted the newcomers warmly. He was a wretched-looking little creature, wearing a cloth cap, with a long tassel hanging down over his ear. Firmin, who was always ready to air his oratorical talent, began describing the trial through which Manuel had been put, and the admirable manner in which he had stood it. The others shrugged their shoulders; they had done better than that on their outset; but they were willing to drink the health of the new comrade.

Time was hurrying on, and the night's work was not yet finished, except for those who lived in this hamlet, and left their bales of tobacco with their host the grocer. Some of the others had to deliver their goods in a village farther off. Among these were Firmin and Manuel, who, laden with some dozens of watches, had to trudge nine miles farther. They started at midnight. When they had walked some distance they met a spring cart, and the driver kindly offered them a lift; he was a good fellow, rather simple-minded; Firmin knew him well, and beguiled the way with marvellous tales which had never found such an uncritical audience.

Manuel was at first amused, but the narrator's

voice was soon lost to him in a sort of thick mist which became a deep sleep. After an hour he was roughly aroused by his companion. They had to leave the cart and take a path across the woods which would bring them to their destination. Manuel had been so sound asleep that even, after walking for twenty minutes, he could not feel sure that he was quite awake. His benumbed faculties were still floating in a dim region where all the events of the night were mingled in strange confusion.

The echo of Jonquille's songs was still ringing in his ears. Although the country he was walking through was quite flat, he fancied he was still climbing up a steep ravine, and lifted his feet with a great effort; the soles of his boots seemed weighted with lead, his eyelids closed in spite of himself, and even as he walked he fell fast asleep from time to time. Firmin laughed at his drowsiness, and amused himself by slapping Manuel's shoulder and making him wake up with a start.

'Come, old fellow, rouse up, your conversation is not very amusing; you are but a baby after all; fancy a fellow of five feet six not being able to keep awake an hour after midnight!

Courage now, pull yourself together. In a quarter of an hour we will put the little dear to bed, tuck him up well, and give him some warm milk.'

Manuel, annoyed at being made fun of in this way, tried in vain to shake off the torpor which made his legs heavy and his brain dull. The last mile seemed as if it would never end; his head was full of incoherent ideas produced by this strange state of half-sleep, half-waking dreams. He fancied sometimes that he was walking under a leaden extinguisher, which was suffocating him and crushing his shoulders, and then he lost the thread of his ideas for a moment and feebly tried to recover it. At last when, by a great effort, he opened his eyes wide, he saw lights dancing round him.

'Why is the town lighted up?' he asked in the dull voice of one talking in his sleep.

'Hum; what *do* you mean?' said Firmin.

Then Manuel woke up completely, and the lights were gone, and he only saw the long, long road stretching out before him—a dim, pale line between the darkened fields. How many more steps must he take before he reached the goal?

‘One, two, three!—one, two, three! March on, man,’ said Firmin, to encourage him.

At last they reached their destination just as Manuel was dreaming that he was the Wandering Jew, and was trying to remember what crime he was expiating. Firmin had a lodging in the little town, and took Manuel to his own room. He persuaded him, with some difficulty, to undress before going to bed, and saw him fall asleep before his head touched the pillow. He then made himself a glass of grog, strong enough to blow you up, as he would say, and began to read *Monte Cristo*.

When Manuel at last woke up, he found that he had slept eight hours without moving, without even stirring a finger. He rubbed his eyes; the room, which was strange to him, was empty. He was going to make the well-known query, ‘Where am I?’ when the door opened, and Firmin came in, bringing a coffee-pot and a jug of milk.

‘All right? You were snoring away solemnly when I went out this morning. I have delivered the goods, and received payment. You will take the money to Master Constant Loison, and take care you get paid yourself. Now get up while I go and buy a loaf for our breakfast.’

Manuel got up, feeling as fresh as possible ; his limbs had recovered their usual elasticity. When he put his head out of the window he was surprised to find that he was looking down from the third story ; he could not remember how he had ever climbed up three flights of stairs the night before. Firmin was not slow to banter Manuel on his wonderful power of sleeping while he walked ; the youth felt quite ashamed of himself, and tried to make his host understand that he had been wearied out quite as much by the excitements of the day before as by the night march. But he felt it was a sorry ending to what had been, on the whole, a glorious adventure, and he resolved to take the first opportunity to show himself in a better light. Firmin advised him to return home by the coach, for fear he should fall asleep on the way, and walk straight into the river. Manuel, who did not admire these jokes as much as the author of them, shook his shoulders impatiently, and went off on foot with a resolute air and wide awake.

The nine miles he had to travel seemed short to him, for his mind was full of thoughts. When he got home no one was there, and he went off to the factory as usual. The great gate had

been closed an hour; but Manuel had an acquaintance in the engine-room, who let him in by the back door. He slipped in quietly into the workshop and took his place without attracting the attention of the foreman, whose back was turned to him.

Constant Loison raised his eyes; he looked the picture of a respectable, working watch-maker as he bent over his table, dressed in a blouse and clean linen collar, with a file in his hand, and a microscope fixed to his right eye by a piece of wire round his head. *He* would not be the sort of fellow to ramble about all night, and sleep all the morning, and lose half a day's work.

'What have you been about? You look as if you had been making a night of it, you rascal.'

He said this in a low tone, but very distinctly, in order that his left-hand neighbour might understand that *he* had nothing to do with Manuel's scrapes, and that he did not at all approve of them.

Manuel did not answer, but as he sat down he jingled the little bag of five-franc pieces in his pocket.

‘This money is for you,’ said he.

Constant frowned at him to bid him be quiet, but all the afternoon his thoughts kept hovering about that bag; he kept calculating how much money there would be, and how pleasant it would be to count it out and hear it ringing on the table, and what a nice addition it would be to his hoard. Ah! but then there were the smugglers to pay; yes, there were a good many expenses, and what was the use of money to those careless, extravagant lads, who spent all their earnings in gambling and drinking, and buying yellow kerchiefs for Jonquille.

‘Let them leave her alone; she won’t require their presents. *I* shall give her plenty of ribbons and kerchiefs, but still she must be more careful. Why should she wear a silk kerchief every day? I have even seen her wear a delicate, primrose-coloured china crape scarf, which must have cost ten francs at least. It may be all very well on Sundays, but on other days a cotton kerchief would be much more suitable.’

While Constant was having these thoughts, Manuel was working worse than usual, for he was so dreadfully bored. It was a hot, thundery afternoon, and heavy clouds lowered in the sky.

The close air of the workshop made him sleepy ; he lifted his head from time to time to take a long breath, but how bad was the air he inhaled ; how gladly he would have exchanged it for the breezes of the river, even if an odour of fish lingered on them, as it sometimes does in summer.

His thoughts were constantly turning to the events of the previous night, and buzzed round Jonquille's home like a swarm of bees round a hive. Without thinking he began to hum the air of the smugglers' song—

‘ We are the winners of hearts and coin ;
The lasses love us, we've choice of fair,
And the lads are all agog to join.’

‘ Silence down there ! ’ cried the foreman.
‘ Who is this song-bird ? ’

Constant grew pale ; this song might betray something. What an awkward partner Manuel was.

But silence set in again, and Manuel, vaguely staring at his work, continued his reveries.

‘ When will the next expedition be ? ’ he suddenly asked, turning to Constant.

The latter trembled, sent his tool in a wrong direction, and injured the delicate little wheel

he was fitting into its place. He muttered an oath.

‘I should dismiss you if I were master here,’ he said, looking angrily at Manuel.

‘I shouldn’t mind if you did,’ he answered.

The foreman again called out ‘Silence,’ and Manuel did not utter a word more.

Constant regretted having lost his temper, for he believed firmly in the proverb, ‘You won’t catch flies with vinegar;’ and he always liked to be on good terms with people who might be useful to him. After supper, therefore, when the time came for a pipe and a chat he was extra gracious to Manuel, and begged him to describe the adventures of the night. When he heard that all the bales had been safely delivered he gave a sigh of relief.

‘You have brought the luck back, my boy. Do you feel inclined to have another try?’

‘When?’ said Manuel eagerly.

‘Oh! to-morrow, or the day after, or when you like. You saw we have a whole stock of goods at Mother Salomé’s. You might make up a nice little party of three. I shouldn’t mind employing you four nights in the week; but you must take care and not work too hard. You

mayn't think about yourself; but I think for you.'

His voice was full of friendly feeling. He passed his hand gently over Manuel's shoulders as if to say, 'What capital shoulders—broad and strong; they are excellent for carrying my bales of tobacco and boxes of watches.'

Manuel shook him off roughly; he did not like being stroked down like a horse.

Constant took no notice of this repulse which betrayed a certain dislike, but went on to say—

'The worst is you will never be punctual to your work in the factory if you run about all night, and you will be dismissed after playing truant three or four times.'

'So much the better for me and for you too, I expect,' said Manuel, laughing. He was amused at the diplomatic ways of his companion. He continued, 'You spread your nets too much in sight of the bird. Do you think I am a fool to be caught like that? If you would only speak out frankly, we should understand each other much quicker.'

'Manuel,' said Constant with great solemnity, 'I want to do you a good turn, if at the same

time I do myself one. Why should I not kill two birds with one stone?’

‘Quite so; but go on—speak out.’

‘If you stayed on in the factory you would soon betray us both; then why not start on your new career, where you will have plenty of fun and money too? In four nights you can earn as much as in a week at the factory, and have the rest of the time to yourself. It seems to me that it is you who will gain by this arrangement.’

Manuel did not answer at once. He watched the black clouds round the setting sun. A flash of lightning came from time to time, but no sound of thunder followed.

‘The storm is passing away,’ he said. ‘It is following the course of the river. It is very lonely in that gorge; suppose the lightning were to strike the house.’

‘Do you mean Jonquille’s house?’ interrupted Constant, with an angry look. ‘What makes you think of her now? I warn you; you had better not be falling in love with the girl.’ He drew nearer to Manuel and looked straight into his eyes. His menacing look gradually changed, he recollected himself, and added in a guarded

manner, as if afraid of giving way to his feelings, 'I warn you as a friend ; she would never suit you ; besides, she will marry *me*.'

Manuel started, and opened his mouth to protest or to question, but he deemed it wiser to be silent. He thought instead, 'I will ask Jonquille herself whether it is true.'

CHAPTER V

THE next day Manuel began settling his affairs and arranging his new mode of life. He paid up his small debts and looked for another lodging nearer his new work. He left his savings and furniture in Constant Loison's care, and begged him to find a new lodger to share his room. He then filled a small box with clothes, which he sent on by coach, and went off with a few crowns in his pocket to search for a home nearer the frontier. He found it in a poor-looking cottage on the river-bank, about three-quarters of an hour's walk from the gorge of Chatelot. The room was small and badly furnished, but tolerably airy and clean. After making inquiries at the neighbouring inn into the owner's character he settled himself there, and unpacked and arranged his things. When this was done, and it did not take long, he sat down on his trunk

by the window and thought over his new position. He was free ; he felt no pain in breaking away from the old life, no regret, no fears for the future. He left no debts, he broke no ties, he had no relations, no duties called him back. No one had any longer the right to say to him ‘Come here ;’ ‘Do this.’ He was now a law unto himself—his own master and ruler. He would no longer hear the discordant shriek of the factory whistle ; he was as happy as a boy the day the holidays begin.

A bird flew past the window and Manuel’s eyes followed it with a sigh of relief ; he need no longer envy the birds their wings and their freedom to fly whither they would through boundless space. He might roam all day long, with no guide but his own free will ; he would let his watch run down ; it need no longer mark the slow hours of factory work nor the brief moments of liberty. How little he cared to count the hours now that the whole day was his. He stood up eager to begin his new life. Where should he go ? He would go to Mother Salomé and arrange a new expedition.

It was a gray, sad-looking day ; the storm had left heavy clouds behind, which trailed across the

sky. In these mountain gorges, where the sun rarely penetrates, the air gets chilly before rain, and in the middle of July you might fancy yourself in late autumn.

In spite of the weather Pierre had been anxious to go out, and his sister had placed him in a sheltered corner near the door where he might catch the least gleam of sunshine. He was wrapped in a long, smuggler's cloak of blue cloth which reached to his feet; his delicate hands were hidden in the wide sleeves. He looked paler than usual, for there was no sun to give colour to his wan cheeks.

Jonquille sat on a low stool near her brother, preparing vegetables for cooking; every now and then she stopped her work to call the poultry and ducks around her, and to amuse herself by pretending to throw them food and watching their disappointment; the feathered folk went away clucking and quacking and protesting against such treatment, but were quite ready to come again, and buoyant with new hopes when the next call was heard. Jonquille sat, with her hands clasped round her knees, laughing at the behaviour of the creatures who came open-mouthed, pushing and squabbling to get

the expected food. The ducks were always last, waddling along like fat Chinese mandarins; the hens, with their long legs, were more active, and came chattering and pecking right and left and then retired, loudly proclaiming their disgust, being followed more slowly by the offended ducks in the rear.

‘How you tease them,’ said Pierre, laughing.

‘They must have their vexations too; it’s only fair—otherwise every one would like to be a duck. I have my troubles too.’

Pierre looked at her anxiously.

‘What troubles you, sister?’

‘I am anxious about our lads; I hope they got over the journey safely the other night. They might have sent me word yesterday. They know that I worry about them.’

‘Indeed, you don’t generally seem so anxious.’

‘They had a new comrade with them.’

Jonquille turned her head away abruptly, for a blush was mounting into her brown cheek. She held a lettuce in her hand and began picking off the leaves, whether green or withered, in an impatient way, and throwing them all into her basket; then she went on talking, but without looking at Pierre.

‘You understand that a new lad may endanger all; he may be awkward—yet no, I don’t think he’s that; he would rather be over-bold, want to distinguish himself—he may break his neck; such things do happen. I have regretted a hundred times that I ever pointed out that cleft to them; it is too risky. I shall forbid their using it; but our lads are as obstinate as mules, and don’t count the risks. Who would think of taking a new fellow by such a path? I told Firmin to have an eye on the lad; but he will forget—he thinks of nothing but his pipe.’

Jonquille had let the knife and lettuce fall in her agitation, her apron string got loose, and the apron full of vegetables fell in a heap on the ground; the ducks and chickens took advantage of this, and pecked about in it to their great satisfaction.

‘And yet,’ continued the girl, who seemed to find relief in talk, ‘they say that bad news travels faster than good news, so I say to myself, “If anything had happened to one of the lads, I should have heard of it already;” don’t you think so, Pierre?’

Pierre answered absently; he was evidently thinking more of his sister and her state of mind

than of the fate of the smugglers. He looked at her attentively ; then suddenly, without giving the clue to his train of thoughts, he changed the subject and said in a deliberate voice—

‘Last night, Jonquille, I dreamt that you were going to be married.’

She started.

‘To whom?’ she asked eagerly.

‘I don’t know who it was. I couldn’t see his face ; but he was a big fellow, and you seemed to love him dearly.’

Jonquille shrugged her shoulders.

‘Dreams are lies. What did *he* say to me in your dream, Pierre?’

‘He said, “My wife,” and kissed you.’

‘Several times?’

‘No, only once.’

‘What nonsense ; and did I allow him?’

‘Ah ! then my dream got misty ; the room changed into a boat, and I was by your side. You hid me under your white veil ; but he was still there, holding your hand and saying, “What a pleasant wedding trip, Madame Jonquille !” But when I looked again I only saw the priest.’

‘To bless the marriage, of course,’ said Jon-

quille. 'Your dream is as sensible as you yourself, Pierre; mine have neither head nor tail. But tell me, did not you see the least bit what he was like?'

'No; he seemed to be in a haze, and it didn't seem strange to me.'

'That shows,' said Jonquille, kissing her brother vehemently, to his surprise, 'that my husband is still in the clouds, and for my part I am very glad. Not that I want to be an old maid though; but, do you know, Pierre, that I sometimes dread this future husband. For you must know'—she said this with a proud toss of her head—'my husband must not be at my beck and call like a servant; he must be my master.'

As she said this she lifted her eyes to the path, but bent them down again immediately and took up her former occupation.

'Who is that man?' asked Pierre. 'See, Jonquille, he is coming down the path.'

'That is the new lad—Manuel Vincent,' she answered, without turning her head.

Manuel came up to the garden fence.

'May I come in?' he asked, raising his hat with rather an embarrassed manner.

‘Have you come back already?’ said Jonquille coldly; ‘you may come in if you like.’

He raised the latch of the gate and came slowly forward. The sight of Pierre made him feel uncomfortable.

When a strong man sees a weak, suffering fellow-creature, his first feeling is embarrassment, his first impulse is to go away. But a kind, pitiful man conquers this feeling and stays—and Manuel stayed. After saying a few words to Jonquille he stooped down to Pierre, and taking his little, cold hands in his own strong, warm ones, he said—

‘Is this your brother? He looks rather pale: wouldn’t he like a little turn in the sun?’

‘Oh, indeed he would!’ answered Jonquille, seeing the colour rise in her brother’s cheeks at the thought of such a pleasure: ‘but I am not strong enough to carry him; all I can do is to get him as far as this.’

‘Could I manage it without hurting him?’ continued Manuel, twirling his hat in his hand: a sort of shyness prevented him speaking to Pierre himself.

The pleased look on the boy’s face gave place to an expression of disappointment.

‘I am sure you could do it very well,’ he said in a low voice ; ‘but if it bores you, never mind ; I don’t much care.’

‘Try,’ said Jonquille ; ‘my poor Pierre is not heavy.’

Manuel bent down, and Pierre felt himself taken up as if he were a feather, and so gently was it done that he felt no jar or shock in his poor, weak back. He leant his weary head against Manuel’s strong shoulder, while two vigorous arms supported him.

‘How nice this is !’ he said, with a sigh of satisfaction.

Jonquille gave Manuel one of her rare, soft smiles which passed quickly across her expressive face, and gave it a strange, fleeting sweetness, like a sudden beam of light across a midnight sky. Manuel would have done a great deal to win such a reward again ; but one could no more arrest such a fugitive smile on Jonquille’s face than a flash of lightning.

‘Where shall we go ?’ said Pierre, eager to begin this excursion, which was a great event to him.

While he spoke the clouds parted as if ashamed to overshadow his joy, and the rays

of the sun burst forth and sparkled on the water.

‘There is my friend, the sun,’ said Pierre : ‘let us go to the grotto ; the river is beautiful down there ; I will show you the way.’

‘I must stay and wash my lettuces,’ said Jonquille, giving a kick to the unfortunate heap of vegetables, ‘otherwise I would come too. When the world is managed by me, I shall make the men look after the dinner.’

Manuel, guided by Pierre, went down by a little side-path which led along the river ; at length he stopped, for the river seemed to bar his path by a sudden turn.

‘Stoop a little,’ said Pierre, ‘and turn to the right.’

A chalk cliff seemed to come down here, like a smooth wall, to the water’s edge, but it was hollowed out underneath by the constant washing of the river, and formed a long, low grotto which was dry in summer though wet during the spring-floods. Manuel advanced cautiously along the narrow path, hemmed in between the cliff and the river, which led to the grotto. He sat down on one of the great blocks of stone which served for seats, while the floor was paved

with blue and white pebbles, as smooth as polished agates. The strange aspect of the place made him dumb ; and, indeed, it was difficult to raise one's voice above the roar of waters. The low roof of the grotto enclosed the view like the frame of a picture, the river dashed over the weir, and nothing could be seen but foaming waters and a narrow strip of green above. The river here was like a bewitching mermaid, with all her charms, full of surprises and fascination ; now she leaped in foam, and threw up great jets of spray, which seemed like the manes of her coursers as she rushed over the weir, and now she swept into some quiet eddy under the bank ; and then, again, all her fury and impetuosity vanished within a stone's throw of the dam ; the roar of the waters subsided into a whisper under the overhanging branches, and the foaming waves became smiling ripples which sparkled in the sunlight. These contrasts please the eye ; we look up from the peaceful stream to the raging water, which has already carried away many a block of stone which dammed its course, and think the old saying 'unstable as water,' is as true as it was two thousand years ago. And yet this capricious, ruthless, cruel element has

fascinated all hearts, even those that seem coldest and most cynical. The mountains and forests and meadows are beautiful, but water is still more so ; it has more life and motion, and people in all ages have given it a personality capable of loving and hating. Manuel and Pierre were silent for some time ; they could not see the sky, but they knew that the clouds had drifted away from the light on the water. At last Manuel got up ; he was afraid that the damp coolness of the grotto might harm the delicate lad.

‘How beautiful it is ! Thank you so much : but aren’t you tired ?’ said Pierre.

‘Tired ; why, you are not a bit heavier than my bale the other night ! I will take you up the path again, and find a nice, sunny corner, for I felt you shiver just now.’

He soon found a dry, grassy spot, sheltered on one side by thick bushes, but open on the other to the sun, whose heat was reflected back by a great gray rock on the right. Pierre looked around with the intent observation of one who has been shut up for a long time in a narrow space, and who drinks in every detail eagerly, and feasts his eyes on the colours and shapes of flowers and stones and bushes, laying up pictures

in his mind to recall them in lonely hours. Two little white butterflies passed by him, and his eyes followed them till they disappeared out of sight; then a lizard darted across the path, and climbing up the rock hid itself in a chink.

‘Let us wait here a little!’ cried Pierre; ‘perhaps he will come out again.’

He watched, and in a minute the timid creature put its head out of the hole, but only to withdraw it again. However, Pierre, who had been on the watch with breathless interest, had just seen his bright eyes and the brilliant green of his head, which in fairy stories is the emerald crown of Prince Lizard. The boy was delighted, but his natural vivacity had been so long checked by illness that he did not express his pleasure, but only smiled and treasured up this scene in his memory to be a delight in the long, monotonous weeks which would follow this unusual treat.

Manuel, having settled him in a sunny nook, where pretty, feathery grasses grew, sat down beside him.

‘You can bask here in this bright sun as if you were a lizard yourself; but don’t you find it too hot?’

He took off his hat, as he said this, to wipe his brow, for he had climbed up the path rapidly, in order to get out of the damp shade.

‘I am never too hot,’ answered Pierre ; ‘Jonquille says I am as cold-blooded as a fish.’

‘One would guess that from the colour of your cheeks. But what is the use of a doctor if he can’t cure you?’ he asked abruptly.

‘I suppose he can’t do anything,’ said Pierre, surprised to see the angry flash in Manuel’s eyes.

‘Can’t do anything, indeed ! I would make him do something. Has he got any common sense or feeling if, after years of study, he can do nothing but let a child vegetate in this fashion —— How long have you been ill ?’

‘I think I have always been like this,’ said the boy in a low voice.

‘And how old are you ?’

‘Fifteen.’

‘Well, there are some things I can’t understand!’ said Manuel to himself. He got up and took a turn, biting his moustache, and then came back.

‘I suppose patience is the most difficult kind of courage,’ he said in a reflective voice.

‘ I don’t know,’ said Pierre ; ‘ but I know that I have not got enough patience ; but one gets accustomed to anything, even to bearing pain.’

Manuel shook his head as if he could not believe that.

‘ I should be a coward if I had to suffer for a long time,’ he said. ‘ I could clench my teeth and bear torture, or even die without a word ; but to linger and bear pain constantly—no, I couldn’t do that.’

Pierre tried to turn the conversation ; he never pitied himself, and his natural pride shrank from the pity of others. A woman would have guessed this ; but Manuel, with his rough, kind-heartedness, never thought of it.

‘ I am never dull,’ said Pierre cheerfully ; ‘ I can often work, and then I can read ; I have a great many books.’

‘ Did Jonquille give them to you ?’

‘ She bought me the best ones ; but I have some old ones, quite yellow with age. If you come to my room you will see my bookshelf. I have several illustrated works of Jules Verne ; they cost Jonquille a great deal, for they have gilt edges and binding. Then I’ve got *Paul and Virginia*, and La Fontaine’s *Fables*. My

mother bought an old chest once, full of ragged books. I mended up the worst; there was a *Lives of the Saints*, and a grammar, and an *Imitation of Christ*, and others, from which I learnt a great deal. Jonquille says that if I get well I should make a good clerk —— but I would rather be a traveller,' he added, in a low voice. 'When I can't sleep at night, I amuse myself by inventing all sorts of adventures which I should have in wild countries.'

'That's odd,' said Manuel; 'I too want to have adventures, so we have that point in common.'

'There is another thing we shall think alike about,' said Pierre, looking at his companion with keen, earnest eyes.

'May be; but what is it?'

'Are you not fond of Jonquille?' he said simply.

Although his lonely life had made him very observant, he was quite ignorant of conventional customs, and that it is not usual to speak openly on some subjects. He knew that all the young men who came to the house were his sister's suitors. Jonquille made no secret of it, and he, with his naïve earnestness, thought it the natural

thing, and felt sure that Manuel counted as one more among the number.

The young man remained silent, looking straight before him, and twisting his moustache vehemently, as if it would help him to answer a difficult question.

At last he said, 'I like her voice, and I should be ready to follow her anywhere. But no—I don't think I'm in love with Jonquille.'

'And why not?' said Pierre indignantly; 'isn't she pretty, and good, and brave?'

'Yes,' said Manuel, who felt that he was sinking deeper and deeper into difficulties,—'yes; she is pretty, good, and brave—but she's not like a girl; she's a boy.'

Pierre bent his head and tried hard to keep back the tears which filled his eyes. What Manuel had said openly, he had thought once, perhaps twice; but he would not entertain such a thought, or let it take shape in his mind.

What! blame Jonquille, to whose tenderness he owed everything?

'Let us go now, please,' he said, turning his head away.

He would gladly have stayed there for hours, listening to the grasshoppers and watching the

insects, but it seemed base to him to stay any longer there with a man who criticised his sister so freely. Manuel bent down to take him up in his arms, and as he was arranging the folds of the cloak, he saw that Pierre was quite pale and his lips quivering.

‘My poor boy, am I hurting you?’ he exclaimed; ‘how awkward I am!’

‘Never speak to me again of my sister,’ said Pierre in a trembling voice. ‘Keep your thoughts about her to yourself. But you are quite mistaken; you don’t know her. You don’t know how gentle and tender she is; how skilful with her fingers when she chooses. Is it her fault that she has to take the lead—to row the boat, to watch at night, to scold the lads when they disobey her? She has been brought up in the midst of it all. From morning to night they smoke and drink and quarrel at our house. Jonquille is no fine lady, and you have no right to judge her.’

Pierre had completely broken through his quiet, reserved manner; his eyes were flashing out of his white face, and Manuel felt him tremble from head to foot. He stopped, and looked at him with a new and kindly interest.

‘That’s right, my boy; stand up for your sister. I should do just the same if I had one; only I should defend her with my fists instead of my tongue, which is not a ready one.’ After a minute he went on, ‘I was wrong to say that about your sister; I was a brute. Now, are you satisfied, Pierre?’

His tone of voice showed that he was really sorry to have hurt the lad, and Pierre slipped his hand into Manuel’s, but without saying a word. He had been wounded in a sensitive spot, and he could not get over it at once.

When he saw Jonquille coming up the path to meet them he watched all her movements with an almost painful attention. He would have liked to prove, by all her words and actions, that he who blamed her was in the wrong. Ah! why did she hide all the tender, womanly ways, which Pierre knew so well, and appear brusque and capricious to others?

‘I daresay you are a little tired,’ she said, stroking her brother’s cheek. ‘You stayed a long time up there; but I will forgive you this time, if you won’t do too much again. Dinner is ready, Manuel.’

She said his name without thinking about it.

She was accustomed to call all the lads by their Christian names; but when she saw the young man look surprised, she suddenly blushed all over her face and neck.

‘Well,’ she said angrily, ‘aren’t you called Manuel? The name is rather ugly, to be sure, but still it is yours. Did you expect me to call you my lord?’

She turned on her heels at once and led the way to the low room, where dinner was laid for four. Mother Salomé received her guest rather graciously, but was careful to tell him before he sat down that his dinner would cost thirty sous, that he might not think that he was going to dine at the expense of a widow and orphans, for it was thus she habitually spoke of herself and family, implying that she had heavy charges to bear, and could only just make the two ends meet.

‘I hoped to have met here two or three of the other fellows, and then we might have arranged something for to-night,’ said Manuel.

‘Firmin Mitou is sure to come this afternoon. He rarely lets two days pass without our seeing him,’ answered the hostess. ‘And now, tell me, young man, have you really joined our lads for good and all? You are right; it is a capital

business ; some risks, of course, but good pay and not much competition. But you have no outfit. You want gaiters and iron nails when the ground is frozen, a strong sack, some straps, and a pistol ; those are the principal things.'

'Perhaps you could supply me with them,' said Manuel.

Mother Salomé had not expected him to take the bait so easily.

'I have got a whole set of things as good as new. There may be some buttons off the gaiters, but they can be sewed on. The pistol is excellent. Are you knowing in firearms?'

'I can take a gun to pieces as well as any one, as I have been through the military drill, but I don't pretend to know much more.'

'I gave twenty francs for the pistol, and three more for the powder-horn and bullets ; I will let you have them for the same price as a favour. One must help young people who are starting in life.'

Jonquille put down her knife and fork with a look of determination, and said—

'You have made a mistake, mother. I saw you myself pay only ten francs for that rubbish. If you want to make a profit on it say so out-

right, instead of mystifying Man—— I mean Mr. Manuel.'

She put an emphasis on the '*Mr.*' Manuel blushed.

'What do you mean by this way of going on?' said the hostess, glad to turn Manuel's attention away from her daughter's indiscreet revelation. 'What do you mean by Mistering him?'

'I made a mistake. I meant to say "My lord."'

Manuel grew redder than before, and was inclined to be angry. But Jonquille felt that she had revenged herself enough and began to laugh, and said to her mother—

'Don't look so astonished. I have just been settling a little matter between us; you may settle yours afterwards, but I think the pistol is dear at fifteen francs.'

Mother Salomé threw up her hands indignantly.

'It has but one barrel—that barrel is rusty, the lock is loose. It will take at least three days to put it in order. My lord Vincent, I recommend you not to give more than three crowns for it.'

Pierre looked at his sister imploringly. What made her talk in this way?

‘If you call me “My lord” I shall go away,’ said Manuel, who was not very patient.

‘And pray, what am I to call you?’

‘Manuel only.’

‘Very well; I will call you Manuel only. It is an odd name. Will you have some salad, Manuel only?’

He got up angrily.

‘Oh, Jonquille! how can you tease him so?’ cried Pierre.

‘Sit down again,’ she said in an imperious voice; ‘you can’t run away from the table like that. Where are your manners? Sit still; I have done laughing now.’

The dinner was finished in silence, and then Mother Salomé went off to fetch the outfit which she wanted Manuel to buy.

As soon as the door was closed Jonquille turned to Manuel and said—

‘Come, let us make it up. You ought to have told me that you couldn’t stand being teased; I won’t do it again—till next time.’ Then stretching out her hand to him she continued, ‘Come, get rid of that ugly frown; I forgive you.’

‘Very well,’ said Manuel suddenly; ‘I will make it up, but on one condition.’

‘What is it?’

‘Answer me truly; Constant Loison says that you are going to accept him; but I don’t believe it.

Jonquille frowned.

‘You may believe it or not as you like; it does not matter to me,’ she said in a haughty tone.

‘But it does matter to me,’ said Manuel.

‘And why, pray?’

A woman who asks questions is beginning to soften.

‘Because,’ said the young man at once, ‘I should like you to marry a better man.’

Jonquille shrugged her shoulders.

‘Thank you,’ she said and smiled, adding, ‘If you had not been kind to Pierre I should go on teasing you a little; it helps to form the character of young people. But I wish to tell you plainly that Constant Loison lied. You may tell him that—in fact, I will tell him so myself when I have an opportunity.’

Mother Salomé now returned and threw down an armful of things on the table.

‘Choose amongst these,’ she said, while her claw-like fingers turned over every article of clothing, trying the seams and feeling in the

pockets, for one sometimes finds money in the lining of old coats. 'Here are some good cloth gaiters, with two rows of buttons; or perhaps you want some blouses. I have half a dozen quite new which belonged to my husband—in fact, I was making the last when he went off into the next world. If he had only gone off a fortnight sooner I shouldn't have bought the linen, and so much would have been saved. I've also got upstairs a nice box, with a lock to it; it would just suit you to keep your things in; you would put them in and turn the key, and your landlady could not touch them—— Or perhaps you want flannel vests; you can't do without them as a smuggler. Flannel keeps off rheumatism—everybody knows that—and without it you would be laid up before you were thirty. Come, choose what you want.'

Manuel examined the pistol, which was rusty and out of repair—in fact, it was more like an old saucepan than a weapon of war.

'Twenty francs for this—why, it is only worth ten!' and he pulled at the trigger, which refused to work.

'It's worth eight at the most,' interrupted

Jonquille; she was determined to fight for right and justice, and felt ashamed of her mother, who threw angry glances at her. 'As for the blouses——'

The door opened wide at this moment and a jovial voice exclaimed, 'What, a bazaar! Why, Mother Salomé, are you trying to palm off those old blouses on Manuel? We know your little tricks; why, you have tried to sell them to each of the lads since the year one of the Republic. You forget that your late husband was a very small man, as the song says,' and Firmin Mitou began to hum—

'“Pussy took him for a mouse, but he
My husband is, though small,” said she;
“He is so very small, you see.”’

Jonquille seemed relieved and went to sit down by Pierre. The old huckster had now to reckon with some one who knew what he was about. Manuel selected the things he wanted, and Firmin beat down the price to half the sum originally asked as a 'fair price.'

Ever since the rude shaking Manuel had given Firmin, when he took him for a Custom-House officer, the latter had held Manuel in great esteem, and he now consented, after a little

deliberation, to join him in the proposed expedition.

In order to arrange the details by themselves they got into the boat and went up the river a little way, for it was too hot to stay in the house, and who knows whether the bushes by the path might not have ears?

When they reached a spot where the river spreads itself out on a sandy bed, with great blocks of stone here and there, they moored the boat between two stones, and stretching themselves on the benches of the boat, began to smoke their pipes like Indians at a council of war. After a little while Firmin raised himself on his elbow, and pointing with his pipe to some masses of purple clouds slowly drifting across the sky, said—

‘We shall have rough weather to-night. We often have storms at this time of the year; the current of the river draws them this way. It will be a capital night for our work, comrade.’

‘Will it?’ said Manuel carelessly.

‘Why, when the lightning is flashing right and left, and it rains cats and dogs, do you think that our dear friends, the Custom-House men, will care to turn out? No; they like a dry shirt

better than getting wet to the skin. As for me, I don't care how much it rains—I am waterproof; but we shall not have the pleasure of meeting them to-night, I am quite sure?'

'How many more expeditions will it take to clear off Loison's stock?' asked Manuel.

'Four or five, if we all go; but to-night we shall only have Arsène with us; the others are gone to a wedding at Uncle Gailliard's.'

'Then it will take us a fortnight to get to the end of the bales?'

'Yes; but what does that signify? When they are gone more will come. Constant will make fresh purchases. Mother Salomé's cupboard is never empty of bales.'

Manuel remained thoughtful.

'Has Loison really never gone with you on any expedition?' he asked.

'We should be sadly bothered if he came. Why, he has no nerves, no strength in his legs or wrists or anywhere!'

Manuel went on asking, 'How much profit does he get on his goods?'

'I don't know; twice as much as he gives us, I should think. You see, he supplies the capital.'

They were again silent, while puffs of blue

smoke rose from the boat, which was gently rocked by the stream. The two comrades grew drowsy in the heat of the afternoon, and lulled by this motion they at last fell fast asleep; Firmin rolled to the bottom of the boat, where he could stretch out his limbs comfortably; while Manuel lay on his back dreaming that he was at the factory.

‘Oh, that noise—that dreadful noise of machinery will drive me mad!’ he muttered in his sleep.

He woke in a quarter of an hour with the sun shining full on his face; he turned on one side and listened to the plash of the water which, in his dream, had sounded like the heavy breathing of the steam-engine.

At this moment some one hailed him from the shore; it was Arsène Leroux, whom Firmin and Manuel were expecting to join them in the night’s work. He was heavily built, thick-set, and as strong and placid as an ox. He had no great cleverness, and was no orator. Firmin appreciated this, as it allowed him a larger share in the conversation. He never got excited nor depressed. His usual remark on all occasions was ‘The stones are hard.’ He adapted this indisput-

able truth to all the circumstances of life. Seeing his two comrades on the river, he sat quietly down on the edge of the path.

‘It’s hot,’ said Manuel.

‘Too hot to talk,’ he answered, shaking his head.

‘It’s a little cooler on the water ; we get a little breeze ; I will come and fetch you,’ said Manuel.

Arsène bent his head approvingly, while Manuel rowed to the shore ; but as the former was coming down the bank, he caught his foot in a creeping root and fell forward on the pebbles.

‘No harm,’ he said, getting up at once, and dipping his bleeding hand, which had grazed the stones, in the water. ‘The stones are hard,’ he said phlegmatically.

Firmin was now awake, and the three comrades sat side by side in the boat while Arsène was told of their plans ; he did not trouble about the details ; he had no ideas of his own on the matter, and would never have planned anything himself ; but he would take up the bale when it was ready, and march where he was told to go. His mother had all his earnings in the business. She was a good woman, with a large family, and treated her eldest son like a baby, and scolded

him when she thought he deserved it. He was an excellent listener, and never got impatient, but admired each speaker in turn, and modestly remarked, 'I could never have found so much to say about the matter.'

'You understand now, don't you?' said Firmin, giving him a poke with his elbow.

'All right,' said the other calmly. 'You just go in front and I will follow.'

'We shan't have a lively time to-night; the weather is breaking up.'

'We have had bad times before.'

'You are a plucky fellow,' said Firmin, slapping him on the shoulder. 'Now, come let's have a game.'

Manuel was reluctantly obliged to confess that he had never played at skittles before; but his comrades lost no time in teaching him the noble game, and the afternoon passed quickly by in game after game till supper was served, and after that they prepared to start.

Jonquille had been waiting on the three smugglers; she was more reserved than usual and said but little, and in vain they asked her to give them a song.

‘It isn’t worth while doing it for three,’ she said drily.

‘Then bring us some brandy,’ said Firmin; ‘we must have something to cheer us up before starting.’

Without saying a word she filled three small liqueur glasses and then carefully locked up the bottle.

‘One more,’ said Firmin, who had drunk off his glass at once.

She shook her head.

‘Not a drop more; are you mad? Do you want to break your legs? Come, get ready; it is high time for you to start.’

Manuel was much disappointed. Did Jonquille fear to gain too little by singing to an audience of three? He had a great mind to ask her, but a natural feeling of courtesy prevented him. His purse was well lined, but how could he tell Jonquille that he would gladly pay a crown for each song?

The smugglers started off without enthusiasm; they were dull, almost melancholy, and the expedition did not promise well.

‘We were more lively the other night,’ said Firmin, throwing a reproachful look at the young girl.

‘One day follows another, but you will never find two alike,’ she said carelessly; ‘do you suppose that I am always ready to sing as if I were a musical box?’

It was pouring, and Jonquille wrapped herself up in an old shawl which had already been out often in bad weather. She went on first to where the boat lay, and was followed by Manuel and Firmin, while Arsène came last, and calmly opened a large, red, cotton umbrella.

‘Do you mean to march across the frontier under that red roof?’ asked Firmin, turning round.

‘What’s the use of getting wet?’ he answered. ‘I shall leave my umbrella with Jonquille; she will be snug under it while she waits for us.’

He sat down by her in the boat, sheltering her as much as possible, and looking at her with shy admiration, though the darkness of the night was not favourable to his dumb courtship. His forethought in taking the umbrella was justified, for the rain ceased as they landed, and Arsène had the satisfaction of having his shoulders dry while the two others felt a cold damp penetrating to their skin.

As the Custom-House men were not likely to

be out on such a night, they were able to take an easier way than the one they had gone before. They took a sloping path among the rocks which was not dangerous, but only long and tedious. The thunder was still growling in the distance, but the storm was drifting away, though flashes of lightning lit up the horizon frequently. The road was wet and slippery, and they often had to stop to get rid of the mud which clogged their boots. There was nothing exciting, no steep cliffs to scale as they did the other night, nothing to rouse their spirits, only a monotonous tramp, tramp, through the rain, with the leather straps cutting their shoulders.

‘What stupid work this is,’ said Manuel, stopping for a minute.

‘It’s our business,’ answered Firmin.

‘The stones are hard,’ added Arsène.

‘March.’

‘It’s all Jonquille’s fault,’ thought Manuel bitterly ; ‘if she had liked she might have sent us off in high spirits. Should I have cared about rain the other night ? I could have stayed under a pump without observing it ; but she wants to make us feel her value.’

In two hours’ time they reached the hamlet

where the small grocer lived, and as their bales were this time sugar and tobacco, they left them all with him, and asked him to take them in for the night.

The grocer was a good fellow in spite of his sly look, and besides, he wished to keep on good terms with the smugglers who supplied him with goods, and by whose means he carried on a thriving trade; he, therefore, made up a good fire, round which the three men sat and dried themselves, while they drank grog out of the great brown jug which was keeping hot by the hearth. Firmin now recovered his tongue, but Arsène took his drink with the placidity which he had never lost; Manuel was the only one who could not recover his spirits.

This second expedition, so dull compared with the first, had thrown a damper on his hopes. He had seen the ideal side of a smuggler's life in the excitement of the first night, but he had to learn that a good smuggler must not only be brave, bold, and athletic, but must also, at times, have the patience of a beast of burden, and plod on through the wearisome routine of his work like a pack-horse.

He slept but little, although the hay was dry,

and he had a warm blanket to cover him ; the idea rankled in his mind that perhaps it was from dislike to himself that Jonquille had refused to sing ; or was it one of her many caprices ? Manuel longed to ask Firmin's opinion, but was too proud to do it ; besides, he said to himself, what did Jonquille's vagaries matter to him ; he didn't care, or at least he tried to think so.

He fell asleep in the early morning, and when he woke Arsène was gone, but Firmin was still asleep—Firmin, who had the valuable faculty of keeping awake when he wished, and of laying up a store of sleep when he had the chance.

He lay there dreaming happily, with an aureole of straws sticking out of his hair, and a great red-and-blue checked handkerchief tied loosely round his head. Manuel woke him up at once, for he was eager to arrange a new expedition for that very night ; his comrade rather grumbled at this excess of zeal, but at last agreed to meet him at the appointed hour at Mother Salomé's cottage. They then parted company—the veteran and the new recruit going their several ways home by the shortest roads.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Manuel reached home he threw himself on the bed and tried to sleep, but in vain. It was hot ; there was a coming and going in the house ; the stairs creaked and woke him up every time he fell into a doze ; at last, in despair, he got up.

‘Supposing I went down there, I should have plenty of time to put that pistol in order—— I don’t go to see Jonquille ; she may think so if she likes. She has got into her head that all the fellows fall in love with her ; but I will show her that there is no rule without an exception. Not that I wish her ill. Oh no ; I am rather inclined to be friendly and to like the way she holds her pretty little head so high. Yes ; she is quite right to make herself respected and to hold her own. I would not reproach her for that ; but to refuse to sing—just out of caprice—I can’t approve of that. Pierre ought to speak to her. I am not

going to turn schoolmaster and lecture her ; she would soon send me about my business.'

As he said this to himself, he took his hat, collected a few small tools he had brought from the factory, and put a piece of sandpaper in his pocket. He was in such a hurry to reach his destination—of course he wanted to mend his pistol—that he hurried down the path, and at last began to run till he was out of breath. When he was near the Chatelot gorge and could see Jonquille's home, he went slower, and even dawdled on the way, stopping to throw pebbles into the water. But suddenly, to his great surprise, he saw a window open in the upper story ; it was Pierre's room, and Jonquille made a sign to him with her hand. He hurried on, and when he reached the threshold Jonquille met him. Her face was pale, her eyes had a frightened look, and her lips trembled as she held out both hands to welcome Manuel. She was no longer the proud, cold Jonquille of yesterday.

'How glad I am you have come ! Pierre is ill ; my mother is away ; I did not know what to do. Please come upstairs, quick !'

He followed her at once into Pierre's room, where he had not been before. The lad was lying

back exhausted in his chair; his eyes were closed, and a black line under them was like a bruise; his teeth were clenched, and his lips were blue.

‘He fainted while I was helping him to dress,’ said Jonquille in a low voice; ‘it has happened so before—— but I could not lift him on to the bed; he is too heavy for me to do it when he is quite helpless.’

Manuel bent down and took the boy up in his arms tenderly, touched with pity, as one might lift a wounded lamb. He put him down gently on the bed and then turned to Jonquille.

‘What can I do now?’ he said, not knowing what was the right thing.

‘Stay here while I fetch some vinegar from the kitchen. Oh, what a good thing it was you came! Thank God!’ she said fervently, as she went away.

When Manuel was left alone with Pierre, he took his hand and rubbed it gently. Poor little hand; it was so cold and thin; he remembered that it was slipped into his only yesterday as a token of forgiveness. Manuel was struck with remorse when he saw him lying there, looking so pale, as if his soul had already fled.

‘Poor lad! I hurt him by what I said, and how unjust I was. Jonquille is kind and gentle; she is a true woman. One must see her here in a sickroom in order to know her.’

Jonquille came back, bringing a cup of vinegar and a towel.

‘That’s right,’ she said, looking approvingly at Manuel; ‘rub his hands gently.’

She took her brother’s shoes off and wrapped his feet up in flannel, and then bathed his forehead and temples with vinegar with a light hand, whose movements Manuel could not help watching. She said nothing; her eyes were bent down, and she was evidently making a great effort to remain calm. Sometimes she stooped and put her face close to Pierre’s, to see if he was recovering consciousness. There was nothing imperious about her now; and the tones of her voice were changed and had something touching and supplicating in them.

‘Pierre, darling,’ she whispered, as she put her warm lips to his cold cheek.

Suddenly she rose, and stretching out her hands in terror to Manuel, with dilated eyes and white lips exclaimed—

‘Is he—— No, no! Oh, my God!’ and she

fell on her knees, tearless, and murmuring, 'I have but him.'

Manuel grew pale too, and a great pity filled his heart; he bent down to Pierre and listened intently.

'He is alive still; I can hear his heart beat. Get up, Jonquille, and let us try and do something to bring him back.'

For more than half an hour they tried in vain to restore consciousness. There was no sign of life; no muscle quivered on the calm face which still kept its peaceful, patient look.

At length Manuel said, 'Suppose I carry Pierre to the open window, and see what a thorough draught may do; the fresh air may restore him.'

'Let us try,' said Jonquille, still holding Pierre's hand, and with a frightened expression on her face, while she watched his pale cheeks, which were almost as white as the pillow on which he lay.

Manuel bent down, and for the second time lifted the drooping, emaciated form.

'Open the two windows wide and the door,' he said to Jonquille.

Just at that moment Pierre opened his eyes.

They could not tell whether it was the result of their efforts, or whether the crisis of the fit had passed. Manuel and Jonquille uttered an exclamation of relief, but Pierre, looking round for his sister, said with a slight effort, 'I am better now; I have slept.' Manuel was still holding the lad in his arms, and Pierre's head rested on his shoulder; he sat down gently with him by the window, and Pierre lay quietly in his arms as if he were a little child.

The window was open, and the fresh air came up from the river, bringing with it the murmuring sound of running water. Pierre raised his head a little, drew a long breath, and then fell back, with a look of content, into the strong arms that supported him.

'How you frightened us,' said Jonquille. She thought little of this word *us* which she let drop without thinking, but Manuel treasured it up with those few words of cheer she gave him when he started on his first expedition.

Jonquille, as she spoke, bent over Manuel's shoulder to kiss Pierre with a mother's tenderness; her curls brushed the young man's forehead and sent a sudden thrill through him. He turned round to look at her; their eyes met, and

she smiled. Once before she had smiled on him, and the sweetness was almost sad, it was so fugitive.

‘It was Manuel’s doing that we got you back at last,’ said Jonquille in a tone full of thankfulness.

‘Did I go off as I have done before?’ said Pierre in a dreamy voice.

‘Yes; and you went so far away, and were such a long time coming back. Don’t go away again like that, dear Pierre.’

He looked steadily at her, as if he would have liked to say something, but he did not speak.

Jonquille took his hands eagerly and seemed to read his face.

‘Don’t tire yourself with talking,’ she said; ‘you must keep quiet after this attack. Manuel, stay where you are; for he is better in your arms than in the bed. Stay there, my darling,’ she added to Pierre; ‘I am just going downstairs to get something ready for you to make you strong.’

She went away, shutting the door quietly, and Manuel and Pierre were left alone. After a moment’s pause Pierre began—

‘You helped Jonquille to nurse me, didn’t you, when I—when I had gone?’

‘Yes, my boy.’

‘And you will never say again that Jonquille is a boy, will you?’

Manuel felt himself blushing to the roots of his hair.

‘No, never,’ he said in a low voice.

After that they both remained silent till Jonquille returned with some kind of cordial which Pierre drank to please her. Then he said, ‘I am tired; I had better go to bed.’

Manuel, thinking that the brother and sister would now prefer to be alone together, left them. after telling Jonquille to call him if she wanted anything. He went downstairs, and taking his pistol from the cupboard, where he had left it the day before, he settled himself by the garden wall, with his tools near him. What was he thinking about while he scoured and arranged his pistol? . . . Strange to say, his thoughts turned to the need of earning more money. Many people have this idea constantly floating in their minds, but Manuel had rarely been troubled by it except in moments of need. His tastes had always been simple, and his small earnings were usually enough for him: but to-day he felt ambitious. He might, if he had

cared, have found out the reason of this change ; but he did not wish to question his motives too closely.

‘ It is time,’ he said to himself, ‘ that I should begin to save up some money ; who can tell what might happen ? I might have an accident, which would prevent my working for months, and then I should have to go to the Poorhouse, which wouldn’t be pleasant. Or if I want to set up some business, I should need capital for that. Money is necessary for everything. Now take Jonquille just as an instance. Would she accept a penniless husband ? And I—it’s all “suppose,” for if I think of her, as I do sometimes, she certainly doesn’t think of me—could I go and ask her unless I could say to her, “Trust me ; I can give you and Pierre everything you could want ?” ’

Then he began to reckon up—Oh ! just to see how much it might cost, not seriously,—he began to calculate how much it would cost to furnish two rooms for Jonquille and Pierre, and how much it would cost three persons to keep house. It was all just a castle in the air, he said to himself ; but he had a plan in his head, and this was it. After working for Constant Loison’s

profit for a fortnight, in order to pay his entrance-fee, as it were, he would set up for himself. Why should not he risk his small savings? Was it right that Constant should get all the profits? *He* slept soundly in his warm bed while his companions were risking their lives on the edge of a precipice. His money grew while he slept. And why? Because he had saved some crowns, and the crowns brought forth children, as the smugglers expressed it. Manuel himself had some crowns put by, and why should not he too put them out to interest? He would buy goods, take them across the frontier himself, and find customers; thus he would double his gains. Manuel rose eagerly from his seat, impatient to begin; the night seemed so slow in coming.

‘If only a large party assembled to-night, what a hole they would make in the heap of bales in the dark cupboard, and how much they might get through if they would only work the next night too! But no; they must be prudent, and not rouse the suspicions of the Custom-House officers. How will Constant take the news when I tell him of my plans? I must find some way of smoothing him down.’

Manuel had looked forward to dining alone with Jonquille ; but his hopes were disappointed, for two or three smugglers arrived at twelve o'clock. Jonquille laid the table for them and put the dishes on, after which she went up to Pierre and did not come down again till quite late in the afternoon.

Manuel was vexed ; he thought he had become more intimate with Jonquille, and now she treated him with the same indifference as the others.

Had he not watched with her in her distress—gone through the same anxiety—done his best to help her ? That hour together in the sickroom was a link between them. Why did she now seem to wish to break it ?

After dinner they went to lounge at the skittle-ground as usual. Manuel began to feel very sleepy, and lying down on a board fell fast asleep, with his head pillowed on his arms, and neither the noise of the balls nor his comrades' talk could disturb him. When he woke the sun was setting, the game was over, and the smugglers were sitting on the bank talking. Arsène Leroux and Firmin were seated in the middle of the group, but Manuel remarked that

one of the band was not there. When he drew near they made room for him ; for they no longer looked on him as an intruder, but showed him some cordiality. Firmin was biting his beard and looking annoyed, the others looked grave, and the talk seemed less lively than usual.

‘ Pierre is ill,’ said Manuel’s neighbour, jogging his elbow.

The young man started.

‘ How do you know ? ’ he asked.

‘ Jonquille has sent Michel to fetch the doctor,’ answered the other.

Manuel sprang up exclaiming, ‘ And you let me sleep there without telling me ? ’

‘ Jonquille forbade us. She would not let Arsène or Firmin go, though they both offered. She said you three must be tired on account of last night, and you must save your strength for to-night.’

Manuel shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

‘ That’s nonsense ! you ought to have woke me up. . . . Michel—do you really mean Michel—that short, stout fellow who gets out of breath directly he goes uphill ? It will take him two hours to get to the village, while I could have run all the way.’ Then forgetting his annoyance, as he grew

anxious about the boy, he added, 'Is Pierre much worse, then?'

'Yes; he was unconscious for a long time this morning, and Jonquille was dreadfully frightened; and now he is in pain, poor little fellow! but perhaps the doctor may be able to give him something to soothe him.'

Manuel made no remark. He would not for the world have let the others know that he had spent an hour of anxious watching with Jonquille beside the unconscious boy. He walked away, full of uneasy, jealous thoughts, which seemed to crowd into his mind. Why did Jonquille choose another messenger, with the excuse that it was to spare him fatigue? No; that was not the reason. She liked to scatter her favours all round. That dawdling fellow Michel would reach the village too late; the doctor would be off on his rounds; Michel would not be able to find him, and he would never have the sense to go to the chemist and ask him for some advice or for some soothing draught. Whilst, if it had been he, Manuel, he would have pursued the doctor and brought him here somehow; and all this time Pierre was in pain, and his sister impatiently and anxiously watching. . . . Manuel

was in the midst of these reflections when he saw two men coming down the path; they were Michel and the doctor. The latter had been on his way to see a patient at the Saut du Doubs, and had met Jonquille's messenger on the road and turned back with him at once. When he came into the yard all the smugglers touched their hats, and Michel, proud of his good luck, stopped to tell them about it, while the doctor went into the house.

‘Haven't you said enough about it?’ said Manuel impatiently. ‘You had luck, that's all. You needn't boast about it.’

Firmin, who was also jealous, made a similar remark, and Michel, who was slow in repartee, found himself ‘snubbed,’ as he bitterly expressed it.

In the meantime, Manuel had been watching the windows of Pierre's room and wondering anxiously what was going on up there. He walked up to the house and pushed open the door, which stood ajar. The kitchen, which opened on to the narrow passage, was empty. He waited for ten minutes and then the doctor's step made the stairs creak, and he heard the rustle of a dress, as Jonquille followed the doctor down.

‘I want to know what you really think? Don’t hide the truth from me.’

‘Oh, my good girl!’ said the doctor brusquely, ‘you know as well as I do what I think. As I have told you before, we cannot cure Pierre; it is wonderful that we have kept him with us so long. Just take care that he has everything that he needs; if the pain comes on, give him the soothing draught, of which you have the prescription. Feed him well; let him be in the sunshine and the fresh air; that’s all you can do.’

‘And then I shall keep him a long time yet; shan’t I, doctor?’

‘My poor girl,’ said the doctor, putting his hand kindly on her shoulder, ‘he hangs to life by a thread, but nurse him as if you could make him well; for every day is so much gained.’

Then he went out and Jonquille went slowly back, with drooping head, through the narrow passage. She stopped at the foot of the stairs and hid her face in her hands; then hearing a footstep, she looked up and saw Manuel standing before her, but she did not feel surprised. He took both her hands, and she let him do it; and thus they stood face to face for one moment, though it seemed much longer, yet neither said

a word till Jonquille, suddenly snatching her hands away, and clasping them convulsively behind her, said—

‘The doctor looks at the dark side of things, but tell me what *you* think about it.’

‘I think,’ he answered tenderly, ‘that affectionate care may do a great deal.’

‘Oh! how kind you are; *you* see how it is. Yes; I shall keep my boy a while longer—my Pierre. I have no one but him,’ she added sadly.

And now, in spite of her brave spirit, she burst into tears, with her head clasped in her hands, leaning against the wall. She wept long and bitterly, trembling and sobbing as she murmured, ‘My Pierre—my own boy.’

Manuel, as he watched her grief, felt a strange choking in his throat—the tearless sob of a strong man. He longed to take Jonquille in his arms, to press her to his heart, and to whisper words of passionate tenderness. He had never been able to see a woman cry without feeling moved, but to see *her*—— It seemed to Manuel as if some strong hand was trying to stop the beating of his heart. He could not say a word, and his blood seemed to boil with impatience at seeing this grief, which he could not comfort.

Jonquille had sunk down on the last step of the stairs, and was trying to control her tears ; and he sat down by her and put his arm round her, as a tender and pitiful brother might have done, rather than a passionate lover, as he saw her slight figure still shaken with sobs.

‘Don’t cry any more,’ he said. ‘Come, let us be brave ; let me help you to nurse him. I will be a brother to him, and to you too, Jonquille, if you won’t let me be anything else.’

He spoke with a sudden impulse, hardly conscious of what he was saying. He stopped, surprised at this revelation of himself, for it seemed as if the secret of his heart had taken voice suddenly, and his own words had shown him what was hidden in the depths of his being.

Jonquille remained silent. Had she not understood ?

She got up suddenly.

‘I must not leave Pierre alone,’ she said in a low voice.

Manuel stood up also, saying—

‘Where is that prescription the doctor spoke of ? Let me take it to the village to be made up.’

‘There is no need to-day,’ she said. ‘It is

the same he has ordered before, and there is a bottle half full upstairs.'

Manuel was disappointed. He would have liked to do something for her at once.

'Why did you send Michel this afternoon instead of me?' he asked, as she went upstairs. 'Promise me that in future you will always send me to do your errands.'

She only shook her head.

'I don't like promises. I never make any.'

Manuel felt it hard to answer quietly. He was vexed that, after being allowed to share her sorrow, she should now keep him at a distance; she seemed to take away with one hand what she gave with the other.

'But some day you will have to make a promise, so you may as well begin now, so as to get accustomed. You *must* promise, Jonquille; do you hear?'

No one had yet spoken to her like that. She tried to resist, but he held her wrist tightly in his right hand, while he barred her way with the other. She looked up, cold and proud, and the light of the little window at the top of the stairs fell on her as she stood with sparkling eyes and tangled hair.

‘You must,’ said Manuel ; ‘I have no right to say *must*, it is true, but I cannot endure your caprices any longer.’

‘You are hurting me,’ she said.

He at once let go her wrist, and saw the white marks of his fingers on it till the blood rushed back suddenly and turned them into dark red lines.

‘I beg your pardon,’ he said in a low voice, feeling ashamed of himself.

She stood silent, looking at her wrist. He was expecting a torrent of angry words, but she bent towards him from where she stood, two steps above him, and putting a finger on his shoulder, said—

‘I promise, not because *you* say “I *must*,” but because *I choose*.’

Then she ran away.

Manuel went out, with his mind full of what had happened in that short time. He could not quite understand it. They were not engaged, and yet they seemed to have been urged on by some strange power to reveal feelings which should have remained concealed a little longer. Their words, though vague and indefinite, had lit up like a flash of lightning the dark corners of their hearts. The darkness returned, and yet

it was not the same as before. There might still be doubts, but each knew something which till then had remained hidden.

Manuel avoided the society of his comrades till supper-time, during which he sat silent. Mother Salomé had returned, and no one asked for Jonquille, though every one missed her. Manuel remarked that more brandy than usual was drunk. Just as they were starting for their night's work, Jonquille appeared.

‘Good-night to you, my lads, and good luck,’ she said. ‘My mother will row you across to-night instead of me. When Pierre gets well, I will sing you as many songs as you like.’

Then she beckoned to Manuel.

‘Pierre would like to say good-night to you ; come.’

He followed her, and found Pierre lying back on his pillows, looking as pale as when Manuel held him in his arms, but his eyes were bright and thoughtful. He smiled when he saw Manuel.

‘I wish you good luck and a pleasant journey,’ he said. ‘You will come back to-morrow, won’t you?’

‘Yes, certainly. Are you better, Pierre?’

‘Much better ; I shall be quite well to-morrow.’

Manuel, strange to say, had never kissed any one since his mother died, when he was five years old. His father was not given to caresses, and later on, his solitary life had made him more reserved even than he naturally was. But he was strongly drawn to Pierre. He felt for him a strange mixture of tender pity and reverence, and as he stood looking at his pale face, he suddenly stooped down and gave Pierre a true, brotherly kiss, and then, rather shyly and awkwardly, left the room. Jonquille followed him, holding the lamp so as to light the staircase.

‘He will want some one to sit up with him to-night,’ said Manuel, as he stood there. ‘Will you let me stay and watch?’

‘No,’ she said ; ‘it would be against our rules. None of the lads have ever spent a night in this house. Besides, my mother or I can sit by him.’

She no longer spoke abruptly and drily, but rather seemed to wish to soften her refusal. Manuel left her and rejoined his comrades.

They went off into the darkness, but the young man’s thoughts hovered like a fluttering

moth around the dim light which shone from Pierre's window. He walked on, with his head bent and his mind full of a thousand thoughts, scarcely heeding where he was going, but following Arsène Leroux, who plodded on in his usual heavy, mechanical manner.

When they reached the grocer's cottage his comrades tried to rouse him from his reveries, and make him drink; but he sat apart, with his elbows on his knees, trying to master the strange, new thoughts which seemed to overpower him.

How could he wait another week before carrying out his plan? He was so eager to set to work that he would gladly have leaped over this week in his life to get to the end of it. But as he could not do this, he had to live through these seven days somehow, and spent them partly in three or four expeditions, by means of which the dark cupboard was completely emptied of bales; partly in nursing Pierre and carrying him out daily for a walk, which was an unfailing source of pleasure to the lad. Manuel meantime avoided any more confidential talk with Jonquille, until he could lay his plans definitely before her.

At length, one morning when he considered himself free from his engagement with Constant Loison, he went off to the town, and reached the factory gate when the midday bell was ringing. He waited for the workmen to come out, and soon Constant appeared on the steps, and seemed surprised when he recognised his comrade.

‘Are you going to dine with me?’ he asked, with some embarrassment, for the workmen were watching Manuel. They had heard a rumour that he had joined the smugglers, and looked at him curiously, as he stood carelessly waiting while they filed by. Constant had no wish to take Manuel to the eating-house, where he would meet other workmen. ‘We will dine together in my room, or rather in yours,’ he said. ‘You shall see how much care I take of your furniture; I rub and polish it up myself, and it looks fresher every day.’

Then he ordered a dish from the nearest eating-house, and Manuel set to work on it with a good appetite.

‘How is our business getting on?’ asked Constant.

‘Very well. Here is the account which

Firmin has drawn up for you. All the goods have been delivered, and paid for on the spot. Here is the money.'

Manuel drew out of his pocket a small canvas bag and put it on the table, saying—

'Firmin has deducted the pay for the men, according to the agreement. They were all paid up last night. The bill is on a card in the bag. You must give me a receipt for Firmin.'

Constant ran his eye down the column of figures, and added them up in a low voice.

'So you have been lucky every time, and had no drawbacks—nothing confiscated? Yet I don't get much profit, after all.'

'Nor much trouble, either,' said Manuel, in a slightly ironical tone.

'Trouble, indeed! . . . Don't I risk my money, and have all the anxiety? And yet I barely get three per cent on my capital.'

'Not more than that?' said his future rival, a little disappointed.

'Not a centime more, on my honour. Just look yourself. I have no secrets from you, my dear fellow.'

Manuel's inexperienced eyes looked at rows of figures without being much the wiser. They

only seemed to show him that Constant's profits were small, and that the expenses swallowed up a great deal, for Manuel understood too little about money and investments to know that three per cent for a week is equal to one hundred and fifty per cent for a year. And thus Constant, in spite of his lamentations, more than doubled his capital by the end of the year.

'If it is like this,' said Manuel, 'I shan't make you lose much, for you get very little profit by me.'

'Ha! what do you mean?' said Constant, who was quite taken aback.

'I came to-day on purpose to tell you about it. Don't count on me any longer; I have brought you back good luck, and that was all you wanted, wasn't it?'

'Stop a minute; what does all this mean? Are you going back to the factory?'

'No, thank you; I like a smuggler's life better, and I mean to remain one; only I intend to set up on my own account. I thought, before I came here to-day, that I could earn a good lot by it, but I see that I reckoned on more butter than bread. But all the better, it makes my

conscience easy about you ; for if you only gain three per cent on the whole band, you won't lose much by my absence.'

Constant stopped eating, and sat with his eyes and mouth wide open, and his fork up in the air, as if his breath had been suddenly taken away by being put under an air-pump. Then he lowered his fork slowly, like a flag which is hauled down in sign of defeat, and his look of stupefaction changed into one of malice—

'Ah !' he said, 'you mean to compete with me.'

'No ; I shall go farther away and find fresh customers ; what can it matter to you ?'

'The other lads will want to follow your example, and then I shall get no one.'

'They haven't got money enough ; they must work for you.'

'You think so ? Why, they would borrow from the devil to set up for themselves and do as you're doing !'

'If they are able to do it, I don't see why they shouldn't,' said Manuel coldly ; adding, 'Pray, do you think it just that they should spend their lives earning a nice little sum for you ?'

'They are well paid, and I run all the risks.'

‘I don’t say that you don’t run the risks ; but if they choose to try another plan, as I intend to do, have you any right to stop them ?’

‘I should like to have the right !’ cried Constant in a passion ; ‘and they should soon see what I would do.’

‘But, my good fellow, you haven’t the right, and I don’t see why you should get so angry, as you might get better interest for your money ; the Savings Bank would give you four per cent.’

Constant could make no reply ; he was caught in his own trap. He remained silent, meditating some great revenge ; but, in the meanwhile, he contented himself with a little petty act of spite, and began hacking with his knife on the edges of Manuel’s table.

‘Spare my furniture, if you please,’ said the latter ; ‘is that the way you freshen it up every day ? But now I am willing to make up the loss to you.’

Constant listened attentively while Manuel went on : ‘I have worked seven nights for you ; but I am ready to refund my pay if you like, and here it is.’ He pulled some coins out of his pocket, and put them in a little heap on the table. ‘This shall be the price of my introduc-

tion into the band, for I have not forgotten that it was you who introduced me.'

'I have not forgotten it either, and I shall rue it for many a day,' muttered Constant, as, with no sign of shame or hesitation, he laid hands on the money before him.

Manuel got up, saying, 'Give me the key of my chest.'

Constant threw a key on the table, and Manuel took it and opened his chest; he examined his strong box, which was safe in its corner, and took out the seventy francs it contained, and put them in his pocket. Then he collected his tools, among which was a valuable graver, which had belonged to his father, for which he hoped to get a hundred and fifty francs, and carried them to an agent to be sold at the next auction. As he was coming back he met Constant on the stairs going off to his work, and the two men exchanged looks not altogether friendly. Manuel, however, not wishing to part on bad terms with his old comrade, held out his hand, saying—

'Come, don't bear me a grudge, old fellow: there is room enough in the world for us both, and my little business will not interfere at all with yours.'

Constant would not look up as he passed; but at the foot of the stairs he called out—

‘Good luck, good luck to you,’ in a sneering voice.

Manuel, having received thirty francs as an advance on the price of his tools, found his purse well filled, and went off to a tobacco merchant, where he bought a good stock, and got discount for his ready money. The merchant soon guessed the kind of customer he had, for he supplied many of the smugglers on the frontier. Sometimes his shop would be filled with a number of villagers from Franche Comté, who had made a pilgrimage to the shrine at Einsiedeln with their priest, and now on their journey homewards they filled their pockets with tobacco, delighted to combine a stroke of business with an act of piety. The merchant offered to supply Manuel on good terms, and gave him a wink, as much as to say, ‘I know what you are about,’ which amused Manuel. He took away his purchases in a hand-cart, which was lent to him for two days, but which he determined to buy as soon as he had earned enough. He intended keeping to the tobacco business, as he did not wish to injure the watch trade of his own canton

by supplying any works for watches to the French manufacturers.

When he reached Mother Salomé's house, all his former comrades were assembled outside. At the sight of the cart full of bales they exclaimed, 'All right, here's a cargo from Constant ; we were afraid we should be at a standstill to-night.'

'The cargo is mine,' said Manuel.

They looked at him with surprise.

'So you have funds enough to set up for yourself,' said Firmin, half astonished and half annoyed ; 'is your American uncle dead ?'

'I don't know ; he hasn't sent me word,' said Manuel, who detected jealousy in Firmin's tone, and wished to unfold his plans to Jonquille first.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Manuel had put his cart in the shed, he went into the house to look for the young girl and found Mother Salomé, who told him that Jonquille was upstairs. Manuel, therefore, went up to Pierre's room, where he was always welcome to go. Jonquille blushed when she saw him come in and got up to leave. She had remarked that Manuel had avoided her during the last week, and she was too proud not to avoid him in return.

‘Don't go away,’ said the young man; ‘for I came on purpose to speak to you.’

She sat down, and Manuel went up to Pierre and put his hand gently on the boy's shoulder; he knew Pierre's love for his sister, and hoped to find him friendly to his suit. Though he had come without any definite plan how he would put the important question, yet he was im-

patient and eager to settle the matter as quickly as possible, and now his heart beat as if it would jump into his mouth while he was in the presence of Jonquille, who sat with her eyes down, giving him no encouragement, so that he did not know how to begin.

What he had to say was so simple that it might be expressed in three words; but he thought that perhaps a young girl might like to have a solemn proposal of marriage made in a set speech, just as you wrap a sugar-plum up in gilt paper. All this was in his mind, and at last he resolved, in his awkward way, which hid a natural, chivalrous feeling, to make a speech.

Pierre looked up at him with surprise, and Jonquille felt that something was going to happen. She no longer bent her eyes down but looked towards the window, just showing the graceful outline of her cheek and her little ear, half hidden under the curls which drooped over her slender neck. Manuel looked at her earnestly, and felt that now he knew why no other girl had touched his heart—there was no other like Jonquille. He felt that she was beautiful, though he did not stay to analyse

her charms. Her pride and independence only made her seem dearer to him. 'She was so full of contrasts, so piquant, he was not yet sure whether she might not refuse him, and this uncertainty made him all the more eager to win, and stirred his combative nature.

'Mademoiselle Jonquille,' he began suddenly in a solemn voice—too solemn perhaps for the occasion, but the tone was manly and earnest, 'I want to tell you how it happened. I suppose you know what I am talking of?'

'Yes,' answered Jonquille; she would have said 'No' if she had been a fashionable young lady.

'First of all, I wanted to set up in business for myself, and that is now arranged, and there is no fear of my not getting on. Constant's very angry, but I don't care a button for that' (here he felt that he was getting on a wrong tack). 'However, I don't need to speak of him; I wish to tell you, Mademoiselle Jonquille, that I have now a settled occupation, and I am not afraid of work. When my tools are sold I shall have, counting my savings too, about three hundred francs, which I mean to invest in goods; and then, by making three or four

journeys a week with my own bales, I can earn about forty francs.'

He stopped, hoping to receive some encouragement, but Jonquille still sat with her head turned away. Manuel was obliged to go on, and wiping his forehead with his hand, for this speech was hard work, he continued, 'I have also some furniture.'

'What has all this to do with me?' interrupted Jonquille brusquely. 'What do I care about your furniture or your savings or your forty francs a week?'

'It does concern you,' he said gravely; 'for I offer them all to you, and ask you to be my wife.'

He was very much surprised when she began to laugh and say, 'You should have put that first.'

Pierre seemed to take the matter to heart more than his sister, and looked perplexed and sympathetic.

'Now, Jonquille,' continued Manuel, 'please to give me an answer. I have told you plainly what I can offer you. I have loved you for these last ten days, and before that I admired you very much: I am afraid I don't know how to express myself; but you seem to know more

about such things than I do,' and he looked proudly and reproachfully at her.

'It seems so, indeed,' she said, with a little ironical smile; 'I suppose you never made an offer before.'

Manuel stood looking at her, and felt his love growing stronger every moment.

'Answer him, Jonquille,' said Pierre—'do answer him, for he is very much in earnest. Why do you laugh?'

His sister stroked his cheek gently, then said suddenly—

'You shall answer for me.'

Manuel observed that she blushed as she spoke, and the blood mounted to her temples. Pierre looked at her sadly and gravely.

'She wishes to think it over,' he said at last, turning to Manuel; 'will you please wait till this evening for an answer, and forgive her for laughing; she knows very well at the bottom of her heart that you mean it seriously?'

Jonquille made no remark, but turned her head again towards the window while Manuel went away. Then she came and sat close by her brother, pressing her forehead on the back of his chair, and said in a low voice—

‘I think I shall say “Yes.”’

‘Why did you not say so at once?’

‘Because, though—though I love him, I am afraid of him.’

‘Afraid of him?’

‘Yes,’ she answered; ‘for I have never obeyed anybody, and he will be master, and not a very patient one. If he had waited a little I might have learnt in time to be more yielding.’ Then after a moment’s silence she asked, ‘Pierre, do you think that I should make a good wife?’

‘You are a good sister,’ he answered gently.

They were silent after this, and Jonquille sat long at the window, which looked on the river, and watched the stream flowing on and on, as life does day by day.

While Manuel had been thus occupied, Constant Loison had arrived; he thought that it was high time that he should look after his affairs. He had hired a boy to drag a hand-cart full of goods; but when he saw Manuel’s stock lying in the shed he became wild with anger, and his first impulse was to wreak it on some one; the nearest object being the poor boy who was unlading his goods, and who

thought his master had gone mad when he felt his tight grip on his arm, and saw his face distorted with rage. The boy jumped aside, but Constant had already recovered himself, and felt that he had been a fool to let his real feelings show themselves.

‘I am afraid I hurt you, my boy,’ he said in an apologetic tone. ‘It’s a nervous cramp that seizes me now and again, and I must grip something then.’

‘Then I wish you would grip the shaft of the cart another time,’ grumbled the unfortunate boy, rubbing his arm.

When the goods had been stored, Constant rejoined his comrades who were lounging about in the yard. He said nothing, but he looked, as Firmin said, as threatening as a loaded cannon.

‘Here’s news,’ said one of the smugglers; ‘Manuel is tired of being in the rank and file, and is setting up to be a general.’

‘A general, with no money,’ growled Firmin. ‘I, for one, won’t follow his lead.’

‘He won’t care,’ said Constant; ‘he will trample over you all as well as over me—he will skin you all, my good fellows.’

‘How so?’ they all asked.

‘He is ambitious and revolutionary; I ought to have known it before I enlisted him. I am well punished for it; he has played me a pretty trick, and your turn will come soon.’

‘Explain yourself more clearly,’ said Firmin. ‘Don’t think we shall take a scarecrow for a man.’

Constant felt that he must strike home now.

‘You will see that this beardless boy——’

‘He has more beard than you have,’ interrupted Firmin.

‘Will snatch Jonquille from us,’ continued Constant, not paying any heed to the interruption.

He was talking at random, for he was quite unaware that Manuel had a better chance to gain the prize than the others; but he knew that he was touching on a sore point which they would all feel. They crowded round him with questions—

‘Have you observed anything? Is he courting her?’

‘Is he courting? Why, he’s —— But no, I won’t tell you any more.’

Constant was too prudent to give any details which might be instantly and flatly contradicted. But the fact that he said so little only made the other men curious and angry; he added, in a

tone meant to seem impartial, 'He is a fine lad ; better-looking than any of us.'

'Speak for yourself, you calf-head!' exclaimed Firmin, whose vanity was sorely wounded by this remark.

The epithet did not seem inappropriate to Constant, with his light eyebrows and prominent eyes, and the simple look he chose sometimes to wear. The whole circle laughed loudly, and Constant, enraged, let his cloven foot be seen.

'Laugh, laugh, you fools!' he cried; 'you won't feel so ready to laugh when Manuel has all the business in his hands, and is your captain to order you about as he likes, or dismiss you when he chooses. Ah! you won't like either to see him carry off Jonquille as his prize.'

There was a murmur of anger and astonishment among the men. Constant went on—

'You had nothing of all this to fear from me. I am no climber of passes; I had to trust you to do all that, and if you had chosen to strike I should have been sold; but Manuel can do his own work if needful without you. You will see, my boys, that he has caught us all in a trap.'

Arsène Leroux shook his head.

‘I don’t understand,’ he muttered, for his slow comprehension had not been stirred to anger by these vague prophecies of coming evil; then he added slowly, ‘Manuel is a good fellow.’

Neither had Firmin been convinced by Constant’s angry speech, and he now came forward and stood in the centre of the group, with his pipe in his mouth, and began to address them—

‘Friends—It is now my turn to speak, for I think that this honourable gentleman has occupied your time long enough. I, for my part, think that his speech is terribly wanting in logic, and without that what are we? It is logic which distinguishes us from the irrational creatures. Now I can argue in proper logical form, and state three propositions thus: Those who carry on smuggling, are smugglers. We carry on smuggling, therefore we are smugglers. After proving this, as you see I have done, I go on to say that Manuel has started on his own account, and that displeases me, for it disturbs equality; now equality is one of the watchwords of our glorious Revolution—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: long live the Republic!—but now I don’t see that this will prevent our band going on smuggling as

usual ; let the former speaker explain himself further.'

But now all eyes were turned to the house, for Manuel had just appeared on the threshold. He observed that they became silent and cast angry looks at him as he drew near, but he was so full of his own disturbed thoughts that he did not pay much attention to what was going on around him. He wanted to be alone to think over everything that had happened. How could he wait so many hours for Jonquille's answer, and what would that answer be? He thought it a bad sign that she asked for time to reflect—that generally meant that time is wanted to find polite language to soften a refusal. If she meant to say No, why not say it at once? Was she afraid that he would urge his suit still more? She did not care how much he suffered, and then he went over all he had said, which he had meant to be so respectful and loyal, and which only seemed to afford her amusement.

'If I had another chance I would put it differently,' he said to himself; 'I would show her that I am not a willow wand to be bent any way or to be twisted round her finger.' Then suddenly a great wave of love rose up in his heart and

quenched the bitter thoughts. He walked hastily along the path among the trees, which hid the river and Jonquille's home from him; then he sat down for a moment and tried to recover himself, but he could not sit quiet long; he got up and walked on and on aimlessly and hurriedly, sometimes pausing to press his forehead against the trunk of a beech, and murmuring passionate words.

‘Jonquille, Jonquille! I must win her,—she is full of caprices. Never mind, I must win her—my Jonquille, my darling; others have admired her too, and have dared to tell her their love. How dared they, the rascals?’

And he ground his teeth in a fit of jealousy. This passion for Jonquille had come upon him so suddenly; it was like a fever burning in his veins and taking possession of him, filling him with all kinds of doubts and fears and desires such as delirium brings. For several days the one idea in Manuel's head had been that he must have Jonquille; his brain refused to hold any other idea; and if this state of tension had gone on long, it would probably have brought on a real fever; and who knows whether in that case his ardent passion might not have burnt itself out in

physical suffering, and he would have risen up from his bed weak but convalescent, and in his right mind. For these great passions exhaust themselves and burn up all their fuel in a day.

Night came at last, and Manuel rejoined his comrades in the low parlour, where Mother Salomé was lighting the lamps and laying the table; he sat down on a bench by himself as far as possible from the yellow light which dazzled him. Some one near him was talking of Jonquille; Firmin had turned the conversation on her in hopes that Manuel would betray his state of feeling, and that they might find out what his plans and prospects were. Mother Salomé was asked whether Jonquille would sing that night.

‘Upon my word, I don’t know; the child does what she chooses.’

‘Quite right,’ said Firmin; ‘that is the privilege of pretty girls. For my part,’ he added, throwing a defiant look at Manuel, ‘I don’t know a prettier girl between here and Morteau.’

‘Hold your tongue,’ said Constant.

‘Why should I? I am only speaking the truth, as no one here will deny. . . . I have known dozens of pretty women in my soldiering days; the uniform attracts them as honey does wasps.

and I am not worse-looking than most fellows, in spite of what Constant says.'

He could not swallow the affront he had received from the latter; to be sure, he was not so tall as Manuel, but he had a longer moustache, a fine head of hair, and above all, he was a Frenchman, which he considered was worth all the rest. His companions laughed and let him go on talking.

'And as for singing, haven't I heard enough warbling at theatres and music halls? But in spite of all their airs and graces, their shakes and trills, none of them are fit to hold a candle to Jonquille. What notes she has! When she sings I feel as if I were a guitar, and all my strings were vibrating.'

'That's just it!' cried the rest, delighted with a comparison which expressed so well their own feelings. 'A guitar; that's just it! You have hit the nail on the head, Firmin.'

'And her pretty gestures,' continued the orator, encouraged by the applause he received. 'How she smiles and bends her head and looks right through and beyond you at something which seems far away, and then she puts her

hand on her hip, as if she were going to dance, or play the old forfeit—

‘Kneel to the wittiest,
Bow to the prettiest,
And kiss the one you love best.’

I have sometimes thought she was going to do that, and let us know which of us she prefers.’

All the band except Manuel and Constant burst out laughing. Manuel found it very hard not to rush up to the speaker and seize him by the throat, but he only stood grasping tightly the back of a chair and said nothing, though his brow grew dark, and he bit his lips in anger. For what right had he to stop the mouth of this insolent fellow? At last, feeling that he could restrain himself no longer, he hastily crossed the room and went out.

The kitchen door on the opposite side of the passage stood open; and two dark figures stood out against the ruddy background of the fire.

‘As well have him as another,’ said Mother Salomé’s sharp voice; ‘Constant is well off, but he is too ugly. I should like a son-in-law whom it’s a pleasure to look at; and, besides, you say he has enough to keep you and do something for Pierre as well?’

‘He said a few words about it, but I did not pay much attention; but don’t say anything to him yet, pray, for I should feel so ashamed.’

‘Do you think your fine feelings will make the pot boil, or put anything inside it?’ asked the hostess.

Manuel came abruptly into the kitchen.

‘It is I,’ he said; but his manner softened as he looked at Jonquille. How young and pretty and fragile she looked in spite of all her proud ways. How much need she had of a strong arm to help her and to check her and to prevent her going in rough paths unsuited to a young girl’s tender feet. He spoke in a low, affectionate tone—

‘I have come for your answer; is it to be Yes or No?’

His heart beat so fast that he could hardly finish his sentence steadily.

‘Yes,’ she answered; and at once the low, gloomy, commonplace kitchen became transformed in Manuel’s eyes, and seemed to be full of light, and the fire on the hearth seemed to flame up brighter and to shine on his happiness. Mother Salomé disappeared, and he was alone with Jonquille, who seemed to him to stand

surrounded by a halo of light and glory. His silence perplexed Jonquille ; she was unaware of all that was passing through his mind ; but at last he roused himself from this dream of bliss to find that it was indeed true—Jonquille was his now. He went up to her and seized both her hands. ‘Come,’ he said, feeling that this low room was too small a place for his great joy. ‘Come outside ;’ and he led her into the yard.

The silent stars looked down on them out of the dark blue sky ; a fresh air came up from the river and swept round them both ; Manuel caught Jonquille and strained her to his breast with passionate energy. ‘You have said “Yes,” Jonquille ; say again that it is true—that this is no mere momentary whim ; say “Yes” again.’

She gave no answer, but laid her head on Manuel’s shoulder, as he bent over her. He stooped, and fearing to frighten her, gently kissed her head. Jonquille trembled at this lover’s kiss, the first she had ever received.

‘And you really love me better than any one ?’ he asked.

‘Better ?’ she asked scornfully ; ‘did you think I cared for any of them ?’

‘ But you love me, don’t you, Jonquille ? ’ he continued, his voice trembling with emotion.

‘ Love you ? ’—but the words seemed so strange and sweet in her ears that she could say no more ; and then, with sudden shyness, added, shaking her head, ‘ You ask too many questions, Manuel ; I answered one, and that is quite enough for the present.’ And slipping out of his grasp she ran into the house.

Manuel followed her. He wanted to find her ; he had so much to say, so many things to pour out in the fulness of his heart ; but the kitchen door was shut when he reached it, and he did not venture to go in. He turned into the parlour, where supper had just begun ; as he went in he could see that they had been talking about him. Constant had taken the opportunity to excite the rest of the band against Manuel ; he wished to get him expelled with ignominy ; it was only thus he felt that he could make his own position secure and satisfy his desire for revenge. Firmin disliked Constant, and took every opportunity of contradicting him, though Firmin himself felt anything but friendly to Manuel either at this moment. The latter sat perfectly silent, and no unpleasant remarks

seemed to have any effect on him ; he was not eating, but sat looking at the wall in an absent way. He was roused at last by a remark made by Firmin.

‘Half an hour gone,’ he said, pulling out his watch ; ‘if Jonquille is going to give us a song, it is time she should begin.’

What ! was Jonquille to come and sing to-night to all these rough, rude lads, who discussed her looks and watched each gesture, while every one of them hoped he might be the favoured suitor ! Manuel grew more and more excited, as all this passed through his mind. No ! he would not allow it. This day was sacred to both him and Jonquille as their betrothal day, and it was fitting that Jonquille should now be more retiring and modest, and prepare for the new life of domestic joys which they would share together.

Manuel therefore left the room to warn Jonquille and spare her the necessity of refusing to sing ; he thought that he was quite calm, and did not realise that a feeling of jealousy had crept in. He met Jonquille in the passage.‡

‘Don’t go in,’ he said gravely, stopping her ; ‘they want you to sing, so you had better go up to Pierre’s room.’

‘Why?’ she asked with surprise.

‘Don’t you understand, Jonquille; you belong to me now altogether, and I don’t choose to share you with all the rest?’

‘Oh!’ she said slowly, more astonished than annoyed; ‘but the poor lads will be expecting their bit of music, and if I don’t sing they will drink to keep up their spirits.’

‘You didn’t sing the other night when I begged you.’

‘And you were pleased, weren’t you? Come, Manuel, let me pass, or I shall get angry with you.’

‘Jonquille, do listen, I beg of you; I know many things that you don’t, and that a young girl never knows. If you had only heard those rude lads talk to-night, Jonquille, you would understand better. They admire you as they would a singer at a music hall; they think that you favour them when they cast tender looks at you; but I will make them stop all that; I will give them black eyes instead.’

Jonquille blushed, but she held up her head proudly.

‘You are unjust to the lads,’ she said; ‘perhaps they have not such fine manners as Constant and

you, who have lived in a town, but they have never been wanting in proper respect to me.'

'Do you talk of me and that mealy-mouthed, pig-faced Constant in the same breath?' he asked angrily.

Jonquille could not help laughing; and Manuel, having let off his anger in this manner, added more gently—

'Go up to Pierre to please me, Jonquille; I shall only feel happy if I know that you are safe up there.'

'Thank you for your trust in me,' she answered ironically; and slipping by him before he was aware, she entered the parlour, and was received with cheers by the young men. Manuel followed her; he did not dare lose sight of his treasure; and standing proudly by her, he seemed to say to all, 'Come and take her from me if you dare.'

Manuel's attitude astonished the others, and they were all silent; but he stooped down, and in a voice trembling with emotion whispered in Jonquille's ear, 'You will obey me.'

'Not yet,' she answered in a defiant tone; and, full of rebellious spirit, she raised her head and began to sing.

She had only time to utter two or three notes

when she felt herself suddenly snatched up from the ground, and Manuel was carrying her off in his arms. He reached the door in a moment, bearing his trembling captive, who was secretly pleased at this outburst of her lover, and lay willingly in the strong clasp of his arms. He rushed up the stairs with his precious burden—his rebellious love; but he could feel Jonquille's head nestling on his shoulder, and his burden seemed to grow lighter. She did not struggle any longer. Had he been too rough with her? Was she afraid of him? He opened Pierre's door hastily. Pierre was reading by the light of a lamp; he looked up with surprise, and grew pale when he saw Jonquille in Manuel's arms.

‘What has happened?’ he exclaimed; ‘are you ill, Jonquille?’

Manuel had already set his prisoner free, and, looking rather ashamed of himself, was going to speak, when a loud tumult was heard on the stairs; the noise of steps and loud voices came nearer, and in a moment the door was burst violently open, and Firmin Mitou, gesticulating and talking, rushed in, followed by the whole band of smugglers, with Constant in the rear.

Manuel and Jonquille instinctively drew near

to Pierre to protect him, and Manuel stood quietly by his chair, with his hand on Jonquille's shoulder, eying his enemies. The rough smugglers were silenced at once, and their anger checked by the sight of the invalid boy whom they all loved.

'Firmin,' said Pierre, in his gentle, penetrating voice, 'will you explain what it is you want?'

Firmin came forward, but his anger choked him; he could not speak. He tore off his red tie and threw it on the ground, and then seized his collar as if he would tear it in two, but Constant laid his hand on his arm to stop him; he saw no use in this wanton destruction, and the necktie was too good to be lost; he crept round quietly to pick it up. In the meanwhile, Firmin had found the use of his tongue, which never left him long.

'Come out with us,' he said to Manuel, in a menacing tone, while the others gave a low growl. 'Come, we will have no scene before this child; we will fight it out like men outside.'

'I am ready,' answered Manuel proudly. He took a step forward, but Jonquille went in front of him, saying—

‘It is I who will explain matters, Firmin, to you and the other lads. I will tell you all in a few words; I have promised Manuel Vincent to-night to be his wife.’

She put her hand in his, and they stood there, a handsome couple, as Firmin and the others were obliged to confess to themselves.

The news was a blow to them all, for each one, even Arsène, had dreamt of winning Jonquille—and now who was it who had carried off the prize? This newcomer, of whom they knew nothing except that he was terribly ambitious and meant to be captain of the band; and he began by carrying off their true captain, their leading spirit, their good star. The bold thief must be punished.

‘What are you waiting for?’ asked Constant: ‘why don’t you pay him out at once?’

‘Is that your idea of fair play?’ asked Firmin, pushing Constant rudely aside. ‘Would you have six men fall on one, and before a woman and a child? I should like to turn you out of doors. Hold your tongue, if you have nothing better to suggest. We are honest fellows, and will fight him one by one.’

‘Silence!’ cried Jonquille.

They were so accustomed to obey her, that they kept quiet at her word and listened to what she was going to say.

‘Are you not ashamed, Firmin Mitou?’ she cried; ‘have you no atom of common sense, with all the logic you boast of? Am I not free to marry the man I choose? If he does not suit your taste what does it matter? It is I who am going to marry him; there he is, and he is my choice. Now you may leave the room. You have behaved like fools and madmen, making all this commotion and bursting into Pierre’s room; he will be ill after it to-morrow; a nice way of showing your regard for me, indeed; and now you stand as mute as fish, waiting for Firmin to speak for you; let him speak, then; one can discuss matters with him at any rate.’

This feminine way of reasoning made Pierre smile, but it had its effect on the rebels. They looked at one another as if they were conscious now that their inroad had been inexcusable.

‘I never thought that you would treat me like this,’ added Jonquille,—‘I who looked after you all like a sister; who nursed you, waited on you.’

She turned away and hid her face in her hands with a sob.

‘Don’t cry, Jonquille,’ said Firmin in a subdued voice; ‘I own I was too hasty; I was in a passion; the others will say the same. Come, speak,’ he said, turning to the group of men behind, who still looked gloomy and irritated, but were quieting down.

‘It is quite true,’ said one. ‘Jonquille will understand that it was a blow to us to see her carried off under his arm as if she were an umbrella; but since she does not mind such manners, it is not for us to say anything; of course she is free to choose.’

Jonquille interrupted him here—

‘Certainly, but there is one thing I should like better. Come, boys,’ she said gently, ‘prove yourselves true brothers and friends to me; just now I asked you to go, but now I ask you to stay and to shake hands heartily and wish us both joy; for without your good wishes I should not be quite happy. Come,’ she said in those persuasive tones which had so often moved them, and stepping forward she smiled and added, ‘who will begin?’

‘I,’ answered Arsène, as he went forward awkwardly to meet her. To say the truth, the

blow had fallen less heavily on him than on the others, for he had never been very hopeful of carrying off the prize. But after squeezing both Jonquille's and Manuel's hands in a grasp which meant that he did nothing by halves, he wiped his brow and his eyes, saying, 'The stones are hard,' and then retired into the background.

After a moment's pause Firmin stepped forward; either his natural generosity at last overpowered his anger, or was it, that he enjoyed showing off his magnanimous forgiveness? However it was, he came forward and, solemnly taking both Jonquille's and Manuel's hands in his, said—

'Comrades, I give them my blessing.'

The others followed suit, but they had no fine speeches ready; as for Constant, he had slipped out of the room.

'Now start on your road,' said Jonquille, smiling through her tears; 'you are already very late, and the moon will rise soon, and then you will have no chance.'

'Wait one moment,' said Firmin. 'I was forgetting what was at the bottom of our complaint. That is always the way in a row; one gets so confused at last that one does not know what one began fighting for. Constant Loison de-

clares that Manuel intends to make himself our leader, and we are all to work for his profit. Now just say, my lad, is this true?’

‘Constant is clever,’ answered Manuel; ‘he knows how to wrap up a morsel of truth in a parcel of lies. It’s true that I mean to work on my own account, for I have some savings; but as to being leader of the band, I never thought of such a thing. You are all my elders, and have far more experience than I have; I have not got my epaulets yet.’

This rational and moderate speech satisfied his audience.

‘Ah! I see how it is,’ said Firmin, turning to his comrades; ‘we have been deceived by Constant. I never trusted that fellow, but these two are as innocent as babes. I shall have it out with him when we meet. Now let us be off on the path of glory.’

The whole band left the room quietly. Manuel, who was the last, said good-night to Pierre, then drew Jonquille towards him, and kissing her on the lips for the first time, whispered—

‘I am going to earn money for your wedding-dress.’

CHAPTER VIII

SIX weeks have passed, and August is drawing to a close. The leaves of the brambles are reddening, and the beeches are turning yellow in these mountain gorges where autumn sets in full early. Manuel is sitting on the bank, with his feet nearly touching the water; he is busy catching trout for Mother Salomé's tank. He has got two already in the pail of water beside him under the shade of an elder. But he owes these fish less to his own skill than to their carelessness, for he has none of the qualities of a fisherman; he is too impatient and abrupt in his movements, and gives a sudden jerk to his fly instead of letting it float quietly over the water. His legs feel numb from sitting still; he longs to get up and stretch them, and sympathises with the struggles of his captives, who are beating themselves against the

sides of the narrow pail in vain efforts to get out.

‘Poor little things, how pretty and lively they were in the river! I can’t stand seeing them miserable; here goes, never mind what Mother Salomé may say,’ and he threw down his rod suddenly and sprang up, carrying the pail to the edge of a little bay, where white pebbles gleamed in the transparent water. ‘Good-bye, my pretty ones!’ he exclaimed, emptying the pail into the river. The trout, a little astonished by this change of fortune, remained at first motionless in the troubled water, but soon darted away like arrows and disappeared from Manuel’s eyes. He threw himself idly down on the grass. ‘Now, I am perfectly happy,’ he said to himself; ‘I am at peace with all the world, even with the fish.’ Then he began to muse on his happiness. What a change two months had made in his life. First, he had thrown away his file and his watchmaker’s eyeglass and had gained his liberty, and then he had yielded it up to Jonquille as a precious treasure she was to keep for him. Two months ago he had been nobody, or known only as a number in the factory books; now he had chosen his own calling, and had a house, a wife, and a

brother. The marriage had taken place three days ago, quite quietly, at Jonquille's express desire. First the Protestant pastor had married them, and then the curé, who had baptized Jonquille, gave his blessing; and thus, in the eyes of the law, she became Barnabée Vincent, and brought her husband to her mother's house. Manuel had taken his furniture away from his former lodging and was surprised to find how many scratches and stains and chips it had got; one of the chairs was broken, and the horsehair was peeping out of several rents in the sofa. Manuel was at first inclined to think that all this was Constant's work, but he remembered that twenty-five years' wear will tell on furniture, and thought no more about it.

As he had three weeks' earnings in his pocket he was able to make several purchases which were highly approved of by Mother Salomé. She liked her son-in-law; he was not exacting; he had not said a word about Jonquille's trousseau; he was having a fine chest made for the family linen; and he put his money into the common purse.

Besides that, he was strong and handsome, although a little rough and of a jealous nature;

but that was nothing; he was just the kind of son-in-law she wanted. To be sure, there were some drawbacks; since the betrothal the lads had left off coming, not wishing to let their vexation be seen. Of course they would probably return in time, like cats who cannot bear to forsake their old home even after a fire. But in the meantime little business was done, and the hostess found her earnings at a low ebb. There was no longer the bustle of going and coming to which they were all accustomed; Pierre was the only one who enjoyed the quiet, Mother Salomé found it rather dull, and Jonquille, though she was busy all day cleaning up the house and furniture, missed the wonted stir in the evenings. She spent her afternoons sitting by Pierre, sewing at her modest trousseau, and though stitching was not her favourite occupation she worked steadily, taking long stitches when she got impatient, and then punishing herself by undoing them. Manuel came to supper every evening, and then went up to sit with Pierre before starting on his expeditions; but as he was no great talker, the conversation often flagged. For himself he was content to sit and look at Jonquille and hold

her hand in his ; but the young girl, who was not naturally given to musing, would have preferred a more talkative lover. She tried to make him talk about his past life and to tell her about his childish recollections ; she wanted to know anything about himself, but Manuel was not a born story-teller ; he could not describe well, nor did he love to talk about himself, as a good story-teller always does. He was not the least like Firmin Mitou, who had gone through more adventures, according to his own account, than fifty other smugglers. Jonquille found the evenings monotonous, though she was very happy in feeling herself beloved ; but she missed the old excitement of the start, the voices of the lads, the bustle, and perhaps also the praises she won, which carried her away from the everyday life around. She was anxious that the weeks of betrothal should pass—that happy time of preparation and hope, when a young girl is in a dreamy state of transition, before waking up to be a woman. This passive state was not congenial to Jonquille's active nature ; she longed for the wedding-day and to settle down into ordinary life, when the old habits would be

resumed, and the lads would come back to the house and things be as usual ; gay laughter would once more be heard in the parlour, and songs would be sung, and Manuel would be the chief of the band. Her wish was soon fulfilled, for Manuel was as anxious as herself to hurry on matters, and now they were married, and he was thinking over his wonderful good luck.

‘It isn’t often,’ he thought to himself, ‘that a man gets just the woman he wants, as I have, and so quickly ; besides that, I have got just the kind of work to do that suits me, and I might have been searching for it till my hair was white if that little fool Constant had not shown it to me.’

He felt quite amiably towards Constant at that moment, in spite of calling him a little fool. He would have liked to take him by the collar and have thrown him into the river, and then have picked him out again and lent him his own dry clothes. He was laughing to himself at this idea when a soft footstep came behind, and two hands covered his eyes, and a voice whispered in his ear—

‘Guess who I am ?’

‘My mother-in-law.’

The two little hands were lifted, but as they glided by Manuel’s ears, they could not resist pulling them a little, just to punish him for his impertinence.

Then Jonquille slid down on the grass by her husband; her little feet, clad in their blue stockings and slippers, stretched themselves out in the warm, high grass, and her head rested on Manuel’s shoulder.

‘How nice this is!’ she said, and let her pretty brown head touch his cheek. Suddenly she pushed it aside exclaiming, ‘The end of your moustache went into my eye.’

Manuel twisted his moustache with that pride in it which the owner of a moustache always shows.

‘If you will come so near, it’s not my fault; who touches nettles must expect to be stung.’

‘Then I will go farther off,’ said Jonquille, pouting and turning her back to him.

He was amused by these mimic-angers; these spoilt-child ways made Jonquille seem younger than she was, and if possible more lovable. She was soon tired of feigning annoyance, and

turning towards him, saw the fishing-rod lying on the grass.

‘Have you had any luck fishing? What! nothing in the bucket; stupid fellow.’

Manuel told her what he had done with his two trout.

‘That was very virtuous, very nice to put in a story for good little children; but I am sorry all the same, for some day we must put them in the frying-pan; and besides, my mother will call you stupid, and I don’t allow any one else but myself to do that.’

While she spoke she was busy arranging his tie; she went on—

‘There are people coming to supper too.’

‘Pray who?’ said Manuel, in no very cordial tones.

‘Firmin Mitou and Arsène; they arrived a little while ago, and I came to tell you. Aren’t you pleased?’

‘So—so; rather odd, to disturb us so soon. Why, we are still honeymooning, Jonquille!’

‘There!’ she exclaimed triumphantly; ‘if you could only see how nice your tie looks now, much better than before; do you know,’ she said, looking thoughtfully at him, ‘that

I think you are rather handsome as husbands go.'

'And I,' he rejoined, 'think you charming when you don't invite people to supper.'

'I invite them! What are you thinking of? Why, they came of themselves, as they always used in old times—the good old times,' she added in a low voice.

Her husband looked at her and frowned.

'I thought,' he said, 'that the old times were past for ever. Remember you are a married woman now, Jonquille.'

She laughed.

'That's true; but all the same it's very odd. I don't feel a bit wiser or steadier than I did three days ago. I thought that the curé's blessing would be sure to make one feel much older and wiser as soon as one left the church; but, my poor Manuel, you have only got a foolish little wife after all.'

She threw her arms round his neck; she was not lavish with her caresses, but she wanted to coax him into good humour.

'You will welcome our lads kindly, won't you? You are the master of the house now; don't forget that.'

‘If I were the master of the house,’ he said in a harsh voice, ‘I should shut the door.’

She drew back hurt ; she was not accustomed to this severe tone.

He added more gently—

‘I hoped that things would be a little different—less coming and going of noisy guests, whose conversation is ill-suited to a young wife’s ears. Your mother would not have been a loser by the change ; we should have had a few quiet customers, passers-by, and I would have supplied the rest.’

‘And I suppose you meant to shut me up in my room all day, you jealous man ?’ she exclaimed, for she had guessed the secret cause of his displeasure.

‘Yes, I suppose I am jealous,’ he answered gloomily ; ‘but not exactly in the way you think. I want you to be more shy and retiring. You are afraid of nothing and of nobody ; and it is these lads, whom you addressed on one memorable occasion as your brothers, who have given you this taste for bustle, and taught you these free-and-easy manners.’

She was roused to anger by this speech, and stood up, saying—

‘I am Jonquille ; if you expected a fine lady, Manuel, you are mistaken ; you should have gone elsewhere.’

She began to climb the bank, but he jumped up and held her back, saying—

‘Don’t go. Forget that I said that. Come, be friends again.’

He held her hands tightly, but there was no tone of excuse in his voice.

‘Certainly not,’ she answered indignantly, ‘while you try to keep me by force.’

Manuel’s displeasure had already melted away, and drawing her towards him, he whispered—

‘Ah ! my little Jonquille—my queen, do what you like ; only love me dearly.’

The supper that night was very lively. Firmin was full of talk ; he had so much to tell of a visit he had just paid in Beaujolais to his mother’s family. They were well-to-do people, and had married and multiplied till there were cousins in all parts of the district. Firmin had gone from one house to another, enjoying the hospitality of these rich farmers and vine-growers. According to his account, they all had money in the bank, a feast every Sunday, and the most charming daughters that could be

seen. He tried to pique Jonquille by his descriptions, but she only laughed heartily at his exaggerations. She was pleased that the old way of life had come back, and Manuel had shown himself a tolerably cordial host.

‘Now we shall begin business again,’ said Firmin. ‘As long as this house was the abode of turtle-doves, we birds of night would not disturb it; but now we shall all come back. I gave this fellow notice as I was passing by, and he was delighted to get back to work.’

Arsène Leroux gravely nodded his assent, saying—

‘There has been very little earned lately; and my mother grumbles, for the children cry out for bread.’

‘You see,’ said Jonquille, turning eagerly to her husband, ‘that they can’t do without us; they are accustomed to meet here.’

‘For myself,’ said Firmin, ‘I am going to turn over a new leaf; my cousin the solicitor has taught me that a man with no capital is only half a man. Instead of throwing my money away directly I get it, I am going to start a book at the Savings Bank, and when I have saved enough I shall be off to Beaujolais. That’s the country to live in—vines everywhere.

and pleasant neighbours, and stuffed turkeys running about the lanes.'

Arsène Leroux burst out laughing, which was a great compliment, for it took a great deal to unseat his gravity.

'In spite of all that,' he said, 'I have no doubt the stones there are as hard as here.'

'There *are* no stones!' exclaimed Firmin; 'nothing but rich soil, brown as chocolate, soft as butter. And as for the vineyards, there are some tricky spirits, some will-o'-the-wisps, hidden in them which mount upwards into the grapes, and so into the wine, and so into the heads of the inhabitants who drink it, and this makes them the merriest, gayest folk in the world.

Jonquille sat by listening with amusement to all this nonsense. Now she joined in with ready repartees for Firmin, and teasing playful speeches for her husband. She had not laughed so much for a long time, and when the men were ready to start, she turned to Manuel and said, in a coaxing voice—

'May I sing a little song before you all go?'

'Anything you like, my darling,' he answered gently and rather sadly.

She began her song, and never had her voice sounded clearer or more joyous. She sang like a lark escaping from a cage, mounting up higher and higher in glad burst of melody. Manuel felt himself strangely moved; vague memories and fears, forgotten impressions, feelings that had been lying dormant, were all aroused, and flitted in confused medley through his mind.

‘Would she sing like this for me alone?’ he asked himself, and turned to watch the impression made on his comrades. Too much or too little admiration would equally have annoyed him.

Just as they were leaving he drew near Jonquille, saying gently—

‘Why don’t you sing every evening to Pierre and me?’

‘To be sure,’ she said; ‘I never thought of it.’

Poor child! her gift of song had been sometimes a bread-winner for her, sometimes an enchanted draught of pleasure and excitement at the end of a dull day. She had never thought of using it by her own fireside to give pleasure at home. But then, what sort of home had she been brought up in?

Manuel was in an indulgent mood, and let her cross the river with them, but he would not let her row. He took the oars, and kept her close by him under his sheltering care.

When they landed he let his comrades go on in front, and, kissing Jonquille, bade her return home at once.

‘I don’t like to think of you alone on the river so late. It is bad enough to think of you left in that old house, with no one to defend you. Who can tell what might happen to you without my knowing it, while I am away?’

‘We have always been protected,’ said Jonquille gently. ‘I suppose there is One in heaven who keeps us safe for Pierre’s sake, for I often forget my prayers, and don’t understand much about them.’

After her husband left her Jonquille stepped into the boat and took the oars, meaning to obey and return at once; but the night was so warm and fine that she lingered to enjoy its beauty. Winter would so soon be here, and then she would be shut up between four walls. She leant back on the seat, resting her head on one hand and dipping the other into the water, while she looked for her two favourite stars, and found

them at last reflected side by side in the dark waters of the quiet little reach.

How long ago was it since she called one of them after Manuel? How could so many wonderful things have happened in so few weeks?

She had often dreamt how she would fall in love, and now it had all happened in the most quiet, matter-of-fact way. The only startling incident had been when her lover had snatched her up in his arms and carried her off as a robber seizes a treasure. But then, instead of carrying her off to the ends of the world, he had only taken her to the floor above, and there his lady-love had made terms for him with the rebels. Yet, though Jonquille could smile rather disdainfully at this recollection, she never forgot the warm clasp of his strong arms, and how his heart had beat with joy and excitement. She never loved Manuel so well as when this scene came back to her thoughts.

‘Yes, I love him,’ she said dreamily; ‘but I thought that love would be something different and more engrossing. It has not altered my life at all, as I expected. I still love Pierre and my mother just as I used to do, and I am some-

times, perhaps oftener dull than 'I used to be. I am not always thinking of Manuel, and if I had never known him I should not have been much less happy, I think. But then he came and loved me, and he is good and kind, and would not let a hair of my head be hurt. We women, however brave we are, want a man to protect us.'

Time and the stars were gliding on in their usual course, and an hour had passed before she woke up from her reverie and took up the oars with a start.

'He will scold me for this, but I shall tell him all the same.'

She began telling him at breakfast next day.

'I think I must be a gipsy's child, and have been changed in my cradle, for when it is a fine night I cannot bear having a roof over my head. You and I, Manuel, must take a wedding trip on foot and sleep out at night, and let the little birds cover us with leaves to keep us warm.'

Manuel made no answer, for he had walked all night in order to get home early, and was tired out. He went upstairs and slept till dinner-time, while Jonquille and her mother looked after household matters. In the afternoon Manuel

went into Pierre's room, and offered to take him out for a walk, but the poor boy was not well enough to go out that day. After sitting by him for a few minutes, Manuel got up abruptly—

‘I must find something to do,’ he said. ‘I am ashamed of sitting doing nothing while Jonquille works.’

He went down into the garden, and found his wife picking caterpillars off the cabbages.

‘Give me something to do, Jonquille,’ he said.

‘You may help me if you like.’

He bent down beside her, and spent a quarter of an hour in carefully picking off caterpillars and throwing them into a pail of water. But at last he got up, quite weary of his employment.

‘Is there nothing else for me to do?’ he asked.

‘Nothing to-day; next week you must chop and store up the wood for winter's use.’

‘Couldn't you leave those caterpillars alone now, wife!’

‘Why, husband, if I did our cabbages would look like broomsticks in a fortnight; they would be of no use in the pot.’

Manuel was amused by Jonquille's matronly airs, and recovered his good humour. Looking

round he saw a piece of the fence was broken, and ran to get his hammer and nails and spent the afternoon in odds and ends of repairs. . But doing odds and ends of work is not half so satisfactory as having regular employment, and Manuel found the day long while he drew water and swept out the shed, cut chips for the kitchen fire, or lifted the heavy cauldron when necessary, besides mending a broken shutter.

‘Well,’ said Manuel, as he sat with his wife that evening in Pierre’s room, Mother Salomé having gone to bed early, ‘I confess the afternoon has seemed terribly long to me, and yet I have hammered in at least three dozen nails, till there’s nothing left that wants mending. What shall I do to-morrow, Jonquille?’

‘I will break something in order to give you the pleasure of mending it. But what a baby you make yourself out to be, Manuel; you surely can find something to do?’

‘I should like to know how the other fellows spend their days.’

‘They sleep, most of them, but some make file-handles.’

‘That would remind me too much of the factory.’

‘Arsène helps his mother with the household work; they say he can even iron out linen. Would you like to learn to do that?’

‘Can you do it yourself?’ he asked abruptly, for he did not like to be laughed at.

‘Manuel is right,’ said Pierre, who understood better than Jonquille how irksome idleness was; ‘he must have some work of his own. Supposing you kept rabbits, Manuel.’

‘What a good idea,’ said the latter. ‘There is plenty of room in the shed; I will get a place ready for them to-morrow; between now and Christmas we might breed a lot. I know a man at Recrette who would let me have a pair or two.’

He was so grateful to Pierre that he offered to read to him, and Pierre accepted, with a look of pleasure lighting up his pale face. He was usually so tired at nights that he would let the book drop from his hands, and as the conversation was not very lively the evenings often seemed to him long, but this reading together would make another link between the three. Manuel was an indifferent reader; he had got into the habit at school of reading in a dull, monotonous tone. He paid no attention to commas, but made a long pause at the end of

every paragraph, as much as to say, 'I hope you have got some ideas from what I have read, for it is more than I have.' But after a few pages his voice suddenly gained an expression of intelligence, as if he had just found out that all these sentences, which he had formerly run into one another, really had a meaning which could be enjoyed, and when in a dialogue the speakers changed, he even altered the tone of his voice to mark it; in fact, he became so interested that he stopped to look at the name of the book, which he had never thought of doing before. It was the history of Captain Grant's children, a book full of strange adventures and profusely illustrated; Pierre had read it twenty times over, and when the reader hesitated over some difficult word, he had only to look at Pierre to be told, and then went fluently on his way.

Jouquille's thoughts meanwhile were wandering, and the voice of her husband seemed to mingle with the murmur of the river in her ears. When she folded up her work at ten o'clock, feeling sleepy, Manuel was quite sorry to leave off.

'This is a nice story,' he said; 'I should not have minded reading on a page or two, as it amuses you.'

‘Pierre is tired, and so am I,’ said Jonquille, leaning her drowsy head against her husband’s arm; ‘I don’t much care for these make-believe adventures; if I were a man I should like to go off and have real adventures of my own.’

Manuel found occupation during the next few days in preparing a lodging for the rabbits, and he had, besides, fewer leisure hours, as he slept half the day after several night expeditions. But when the rabbits were lodged, and the winter provision of wood laid up in the shed, he began to ask himself again what he should do with his time? The afternoons were so tedious, and, strange to say, he no longer felt the old pleasure in wandering about the woods, now that he could do it whenever he chose. He would climb to some height and look down on the windings of the river Doubs and the steep cliffs that hemmed it in, but he no longer felt that intense delight in liberty and the freedom to wander where he would, which had filled his heart when a boy.

Manuel was not sufficiently well educated to find resources in himself; he liked to read a little in the evening, but he wanted some manual work in the daytime. Once a week he went to

make purchases in the neighbouring town, and that one day passed quickly enough, but how to get through the other six days of the week?

The band of smugglers fell back into their old habits of coming to the house, as Firmin had predicted they would.

One by one they all dropped in except Constant, who did not appear, but sent his bales regularly. Manuel joined in the games of skittles, which he found as good a way of killing time as any other, but he threw an ardour into his play which astonished his more phlegmatic companions. He never forbade Jonquille to sing now, but rather encouraged her; he seemed to find it a necessary stimulus to prevent his sinking into dull apathy. He was reckless and foolhardy in the night expeditions, and his companions blamed him; but he seemed to enjoy danger and to delight in finding all his faculties called out to meet it. The more difficulties there were on the path, the more he felt drawn to his smuggler's work; but, alas, it only filled up half his time and left the other half dull and monotonous!

The life of a settler in a new country would really have suited Manuel better than any other,

for all his strength and energy would have been called forth daily to battle with a thousand difficulties and dangers. But he felt cramped and confined in the narrow limits of life in an old and long settled country, where he could not move without elbowing a neighbour who was struggling like himself to gain a livelihood. A strong and hardy nature like his requires more air and freedom and fewer restrictions on liberty of action. If a pioneer's axe had been given him and a tract of wild country, he would have shown his powers of endurance and perseverance; he would have been one of those nameless heroes who open out new soil for their weaker brethren, and his days would have been full of interest and employment.

He was in a false position as a smuggler, for his work was fitful and only took up a part of his time, leaving many hours to hang heavily on his hands, till at times he felt inclined to be weary of life altogether.

Shall we who have been more fortunate blame him severely for being in a wrong track, for having blundered in his choice of a calling? Have we done all we could for those less well trained than ourselves to help them in right

judgment and conduct? Have we not had greater advantages at starting? and shall we think harshly of the erring ones who have taken a wrong path and gone far astray?

Manuel had chosen a calling which he knew was illegal, and which he knew involved an irregular mode of life; but he deceived himself into thinking that he had the right to break the laws of two countries and to be a law to himself; and it was this fatal rebellion against all discipline which had spoilt his life, and made him the slave of his own impulses. He had always craved for freedom, and had never realised that being subject to one's own whims is not freedom, but slavery of the worst and most unprofitable kind.

Though no one had spoken to Manuel of emigration, and he had probably never heard of Natal or Congo, yet the thought of seeking a new field, which had been his wish as a boy, now came back to him and haunted him this autumn when he had nothing to do. Perhaps he was unconsciously influenced by the stories of wonderful adventures which he read to Pierre in the evening. He would go and sit on the rocky steps cut in the cliffs overlooking the river.

and dream of far countries, with strange animals, and volcanic peaks, and treasures of gold, while he carved a bit of wood into fantastic heads of birds or beasts. He pictured himself making a clearing in some wild spot and building a house, where his wife would welcome him in the evening, when he came back from the chase, bringing a bear's paws for their supper, or some other dainty such as hunters love.

'Perhaps the books exaggerate,' said Manuel to himself; 'but still, if there were only half the fine things they describe, it would be worth going out there to try the sort of life; and I know there are emigration societies who, for a certain sum, will take you over to any colony you choose, and then a strong and steadfast will can do the rest.'

One evening Manuel touched on the subject near his heart to Jonquille, as he was sitting alone with her in their room. He took her on his knee, as he often did when they had a little quiet chat together, and she leant her head against him, and liked to feel the caressing touch of his hand on her hair.

'Jonquille, are you very fond of this place?' he asked.

‘I don’t know ; I never was anywhere else,’ she said.

‘Because, dear, there are other places where we might be happier.’

‘Happier,’ she echoed. ‘Why, what more do we want?’

‘You are happy, are you? But I want to find some work to do.’

She shrugged her shoulders.

‘You can get something to do ; I have suggested twenty different things.’

‘Woman’s work—I can’t bear those small tools ; give me an axe or a spade.’

‘You can work in our garden in the spring.’

‘Spring!’ he said dreamily ; ‘but there is all winter to come first. Why, I had not thought about that! What can you do all the winter here?—the men, I mean.’

‘They twirl their thumbs ; they are of no use except to do that and smoke their pipes,’ she answered rather impatiently.

‘Can one cross the frontier in winter?’ he asked.

‘Not so easily as in summer ; but there are weeks of open weather when it can be done. But I shall keep you at home as much as I

can,' she said, throwing her arm round his neck. 'You can afford to be idle and take a rest, for you have laid up a good winter store.'

He smiled rather bitterly. Was this what he wanted—to rest and be idle?

'I have thought of another plan,' he said in a hesitating tone. 'How would you like to emigrate, Jonquille?'

'Mercy! what are you thinking of?' she cried; 'have you gone out of your mind?'

'Perhaps so,' he answered abruptly; 'it is enough to make one go out of one's mind; for the last two months I have been worrying myself what to do. This smuggler's life is all very well, but it leaves me too much time on my hands. I love my country; but my country does not seem to care about me, since it gives me no opening to get on.'

'I should have thought,' said Jonquille in a reproachful voice, 'that you had been very lucky lately and got a great deal.'

'That's true, my darling! I am an ungrateful fellow,' he said, drawing her still closer to him. 'You are my treasure. But—I don't know how to explain—a man wants something more even than a house and a dear little wife;

he wants some work and interest in the outside world, and then he can enjoy coming back to his own home each evening. Would you like to go off abroad with me? I would take such care of you that you should not suffer from the long journey.'

'And what would become of Pierre?'

There was a long silence between them. At last Jonquille stood up, and Manuel left the room and went out. The night was dark; the yard was empty of everything but dark shadows, which made it seem vaster. The outline of the roof of the house could not be distinguished from the background of cliffs which stood dimly visible against the cloudy sky. The murmur of the river alone betrayed where it ran. Manuel went down to the shore, and sat on a stone, with his head in his hands. Everything around him seemed gloomy and indistinct like his own thoughts; he could not make out what was wanting in his life, and yet he missed some guiding principle; he felt he had lost his way. The freedom he had longed for was no longer his; he had bound himself fast by fresh ties. He felt for a moment like some wild animal caught in a net and trying in vain to escape

from its meshes. Why had he been so ready to part with his newly-found liberty, and to entangle himself with family ties—Jonquille, Pierre? For one second he thought he hated them. Then he pressed his hands to his forehead—

‘Oh, I am going mad!’ he groaned; ‘darkness is closing round me; I must escape from this somehow.’

He got up abruptly, and paced up and down the yard till his outburst of passion had cooled, and he could laugh bitterly and say—

‘Fool that I was to expect that I could alter the course of events, or that the world would leave off turning round in the old groove. But I don’t seem fitted to go in the groove as others do.’

He paced the yard for some time longer till he had grown calm enough to join Jonquille upstairs. She was waiting for him anxiously, and this dark night formed an epoch in their married life.

CHAPTER IX

THE next morning life began again as usual. Manuel was subject to violent revulsions of feeling, as is often the case with strong and undisciplined natures, and to-day he was unusually gentle to Jonquille and to Pierre. Besides, he happened to have enough on his hands to occupy him.

It was the beginning of November, and a few fluttering snowflakes came to warn them to prepare for winter. The few vegetables that were left had to be dug up and stored in the cellar; the double windows must be fitted in, and the doors bound with list to keep out the cold. Then wine and provisions of flour had to be bought, and a goat to yield a daily supply of milk; for they might be cut off from their neighbours by snowdrifts, and have to depend on their own resources. Manuel stored up also

some bales of tobacco, intending if possible to cross the frontier occasionally if the mountain paths were at all practicable. Although he had been lucky in his business, and had entrusted a nice little sum to Jonquille's care, yet he did not feel that he had earned enough yet for the household, and he intended to defy the smugglers' proverbial saying—

‘In summer we’re gay ;
Winter we sleep away ;
In summer dance and drink wine ;
In winter hungry we pine.’

Though winter expeditions are more risky. they are also more profitable, and Manuel suggested to his companions that they should drive a few stakes along their usual paths to guide them when snow covered the ground, and this labour occupied them for several days.

Jonquille had been busy in Pierre's room filling up the space between the double windows with moss and berries, and hanging boughs of holly and sweet-smelling juniper round the mirror on the wall.

The room looked bright and gay, but it had very little sunlight in it now ; only for an hour or two could the sun penetrate the gorge.

and from December till spring-time the great rocks behind the old house kept it in shadow for three months. Pierre dreaded the approach of that time, when the monotonous hours of suffering would seem drearier still from the gloom and cold. He did not complain, but Jonquille could see how he watched the lessening rays of sunlight.

One day Manuel brought home from the town two pots of primulas, white and red, and a hyacinth bulb, which he put in a wide-mouthed bottle.

‘You can watch them grow,’ he said to Pierre, as he arranged the little garden on a stand near the window.

The boy’s eyes grew bright with pleasure.

‘How kind you are, Manuel!’ he cried.

Manuel blushed, and felt a pang of remorse at these words, for though he loved Pierre, he had evil thoughts sometimes in his heart when his rebellious nature chafed against restraints, and then he felt the lad a burden and a tie keeping him back. It seemed as if two natures were struggling in him, and his will was not strong enough to subdue the lower nature.

In former days he had hated the factory,

and now, though his love for Jonquille was too strong for him to hate the restrictions of married life, he felt his chains even in his happiest moments. Besides, there was the difference between his former and his present bondage. The first had been a heavy burden, but he could break away from it when he chose ; the second was far lighter, but it could not be given up, and the knowledge of this fretted his undisciplined nature, which loathed an indissoluble bond. He would gladly have given up his liberty day by day to Jonquille, but it must be by his own free will. If he had felt that he could go away at any moment he would gladly have stayed, but the more he felt home-ties keeping him in this narrow circle, the more he longed to burst the barriers and regain his freedom. His young wife was quite unconscious of all these tumultuous thoughts which surged through his mind. If she had understood them she might have been able to help him to withstand them, but she was young and inexperienced, and was merely beginning to think to herself that Manuel had a discontented disposition.

‘He has everything he wants, and the kind

of work he always longed for ; what more does he want ?’

Pierre had quicker perceptions, and was more alive to the workings of his brother-in-law’s mind, and what he observed made him anxious. Manuel sometimes found the boy’s keen eyes fixed on him, and if he was in a bad humour it annoyed him to feel himself watched ; but if he was in a good temper he would sit down by Pierre and take his hand, saying—

‘I’m a crotchety fellow, am I not, Pierre ?’ You must teach me to be patient, and to get through life as bravely as you do.’

After this they had long talks together, and Jonquille, coming in upon them unexpectedly, would often find her husband sitting by her brother, with one of Pierre’s favourite books in his hand, *The Imitation of Christ*. But when they saw her they broke off their talk, for Manuel felt that his wife had less sympathy with him in his difficulties than Pierre.

Winter set in at last in earnest, and all the ground was white with snow, the sky was a leaden gray, and a dull silence seemed to reign, which weighed on the spirits. Pierre felt the cold, and Manuel was bored ; Jonquille sat

spinning and singing in a low voice ; while Mother Salomé fell asleep by the kitchen fire. But sometimes, as the roads were not quite blocked up, a merry party would meet together in the old house.

Firmin would appear first, and the others would drop in, and they played cards and smoked, while their hostess roused herself from her nap to put her saucepans on the fire. If it was a moonlight night they sat up late, singing and drinking. Jonquille at length remarked that her husband drank more than was good for him, and became excited and noisy.

‘What fun we had to-night !’ he would say as he put his arm round her ; but she would turn away disgusted from the smell of drink.

The next morning he would be silent and gloomy, and Jonquille read signs of shame and repentance in his looks ; and then she would be more affectionate than usual, and her husband would kiss her, and say—

‘My poor Jonquille, what sort of husband have you got !’

One day he went out into the yard, and found it full of snow, while a great drift had been blown against the fence. Before him rose the

mountain, and behind him another mountain rose like a great wall, while the outlet of the gorge was closed in by a thick mist. He felt as if he were a prisoner in this savage spot, and a sort of despair seized him. He went back into the house with a heavy heart, and stepped into the parlour, the door of which was half open. He saw a small bottle of brandy in the cupboard, and a sudden desire for a stimulant seized him. Here was the very thing to drive away melancholy. He seized the bottle, and was going to drink when he felt a hand checking him. It was Jonquille who stood there, with her eyes full of tears. She threw her arms round his neck, exclaiming—

‘Oh, Manuel! has it come to this? You will ruin yourself, and all our happiness. I see you are unhappy here; it is better you should go away than do this.’

He looked at her for a long time without speaking, and at length shook his head, saying gloomily—

‘I am possessed by an evil spirit. I shall always be a trouble to my wife.’

‘Go and travel,’ she answered; ‘take all the money we have got, and don’t trouble

yourself about me, Manuel ; you are free to go.'

He felt she had given him the liberty for which he had been pining.

'Really,' he said, as if chains had been taken off him ; 'am I free to go?'

'Yes, go.'

'Then I will stay !' he exclaimed, clasping her in his arms ; 'how could I leave my dear little wife?'

She looked at him anxiously, and said—

'But you must promise me one thing : never to drink when you are alone ; it is not so bad for you to take a glass with the others, but when you get melancholy you must fly from spirits as if they were poison ; promise me this.'

'I don't like promises,' he said roughly ; 'I hate to be bound by anything. I had a desponding fit this afternoon and felt miserable ; but you may depend upon me, Jonquille ; it shall not happen again—I am going to turn over a new leaf.'

He kept his word and made a vigorous effort to find some work ; he told his wife the next day that he was going to make some chairs such as watchmakers use, which screw up and

down. He knew some one in the town who would give him an order for them, and he set off that same day, in spite of the bad state of the roads, to buy the necessary wood ; he intended to get Firmin Mitou to turn the legs and screws for him until he had learnt to do it himself.

All went well for some days. Manuel worked diligently, and might be heard whistling gaily in the shed where he had set up his bench. Jonquille used to pay him little visits there to see how he was getting on, and he seemed fonder of her than ever. In the evening he read aloud or played a game of draughts with Pierre, but he found the game too slow to please him ; he preferred the excitement of games of chance, where little thought is required, and where the caprices of Fortune may turn your luck at any moment.

When he had finished his first dozen of chairs, which were very neatly made and carefully polished, he spent his earnings and some savings besides in buying a comfortable arm-chair for Pierre, which went on large wheels, and could be used as a little carriage when the weather was fine.

Manuel was deeply touched by Jonquille's gratitude and the delight she showed, and by Pierre's quiet but intense pleasure at this present.

'That's right, that's right,' he said abruptly ; ' I owed you something for being so cross lately, didn't I ? '

The atmosphere seemed brighter both within and without ; Manuel was more cheerful, and the weather improved so that he was able to be out more, which was a great relief to him. When he felt a melancholy fit coming on he would seize his hat and rush down the path, which he had cut in the snow, by the side of the river. A thaw had set in and the first fall of snow was melting ; they would have a green Christmas this year.

The swollen river rushed roaring by, but the current was not too strong for the boat to ply across ; and there were several night expeditions undertaken at this time, which employed Manuel and kept him in good spirits. After a night full of labour and risk he slept soundly the next morning and was in a good humour for the rest of the day. Jonquille's fears were set at rest, and she went about the

house singing as gay as a lark on a spring morning.

Manuel was determined to have a great feast at Christmas and to ask all his comrades; he told Mother Salomé to spare nothing, and to order in plenty of provisions. The rabbits, which had grown large and fat, had all sold well except two which were reserved for the supper on Christmas Eve. There was abundance of everything in the house, for Manuel had been fortunate in his sale of goods, and had orders enough to last him three months. His mother-in-law was delighted with a son-in-law who spent freely, and had even given her a beautiful brown cloth cloak, which she had asked for, though she had no immediate use for it.

‘One never knows,’ she said to herself, as she put it by in the cupboard; ‘perhaps he won’t be so generous next winter if there is one more to provide for.’

She showed her appreciation of her son-in-law by using all her culinary skill to please him, and advised Jonquille to avoid any quarrels with a husband who could earn so much.

‘If you only coaxed him, you might get

anything out of him, even a silk dress,' she said to her one day; 'though I don't advise you to invest much money in clothes, for they spoil; now a gold chain always fetches its price, and you have something then to fall back on in bad times. But you don't know how to use your opportunities. Why, you might coax anything out of him while you are young and pretty, and he would only be the better pleased!'

'I shall never ask him for anything,' answered Jonquille indignantly. 'Is he not as generous as possible already to you and Pierre?'

Manuel had decided that Constant should be invited to the supper, and Constant accepted readily, for he was glad to make up a quarrel which hindered his business and prevented his looking after it as closely as before. He had become reconciled to the fact of Jonquille's marriage, and as Manuel's business did not seem to interfere with his, he was willing to drop the quarrel for a time.

Although he was no favourite among the band, his presence at the supper made them feel more at their ease, as his would have been

the only vacant seat ; and now they were all assembled as usual.

Of course Firmin made a speech ; indeed, he made several—getting up on the slightest occasion—and no one was inclined to refuse him a hearing. He proposed toasts : concord, free tobacco, and the ladies ; and this last pleased Mother Salomé very much.

Jonquille looked very pretty in her soft, dark blue merino, which had been her wedding-dress. Her brown curls were prettily arranged and kept back from her face by an amber pin which her husband had given her. Constant thought she had improved in looks and manner, and she was less sunburnt at this time of year. The lines of the poet might have been quoted about her—

‘Thy cheeks are neither white nor red,
Only of them it might be said,
The sunlight lingers here.’

Constant also remarked that she had grown quieter ; she laughed less and smiled oftener ; her hair seemed smoother, and her voice softer ; she had kept all her old charms and gained new ones.

His eyes followed her everywhere, and he felt delighted when she came and sat by him, ready to show him that there was a complete reconciliation.

He also had made himself as smart as he could in honour of the festival. His hair had been cut in the last fashion; he had an imitation opal pin in his spotted blue tie, and he felt prepared to make himself as agreeable as possible. He began by paying some compliments to Jonquille, and at last ventured to say that the sight of her wedding ring gave him a pang; but she only smiled and turned the conversation and would not let him take her hand. However, he fancied his complimentary remarks had pleased her, and was quite satisfied. Jonquille would not rouse her husband's jealousy by repeating what Constant had said; he was passionate by nature, and it was not worth while to disturb him with these trifles.

It seemed, now that Christmas was past, that the worst of the winter must be over, but it was not so; though the snow had disappeared and people began to say, 'In a few weeks spring will be here,' they were soon disappointed. A storm came, and the snow fell thick and fast, for winter does not easily loose its hold of mountainous regions, but refuses again and again to let the grass and flowers

appear. Manuel grew impatient, and his spirits went down as the weather grew bad; he had been delighted at the prospect of getting about again, for the long imprisonment had tried his nerves. It may seem strange that a great, strong man should be so sensitive, but his pent-up energy made him restless and irritable.

He was tired of his carpentering work; the first zest of difficulties to be overcome had passed away, and he was bored by making chairs, now that the work was easy to him. This sedentary occupation could not carry off his superfluous energy, which was inclined to explode like steam from being confined in limits. He became quarrelsome and fitful in temper, and Jonquille sometimes bore it patiently, but sometimes rebelled, and then matters became serious.

Constant had gone back to his old habit of frequent calls, and Manuel did not approve of this.

‘Why can’t he leave us alone; do you like him, Jonquille? I can’t bear him since he has become so polite; pray don’t encourage him unless you wish me to quarrel with him.’

Instead of encouraging Jonquille rather avoided Constant, whose attentions were becom-

ing embarrassing. Of course he meant nothing, she said to herself, but she hoped Manuel would not observe it.

Constant had come twice while the smugglers were on expeditions, and Jonquille and her mother were left alone; he brought oranges for Pierre and bonbons for Jonquille, but she refused them, saying she did not care for sweets. He left them on the table when he went away, and Jonquille threw them at once into the river. When her husband returned she told him of the visitor she had had, and he threatened to buy a dog who would eat up all prowling folk and leave nothing but their boots to show they had been there, and Jonquille laughed so heartily at this idea that Manuel's anger was appeased. He was longing for spring to come to get rid of his gloomy thoughts. It was now the middle of February, the time for snowdrops; and on the opposite river-bank the snow was melting and the little green blades were beginning to appear, and the white flowers nodded in the spring breeze. Manuel crossed over in the boat and picked a bunch of snowdrops for Jonquille. As he was coming back he met a man going up to the house.

‘Good day,’ he said, ‘what are you bringing to our house?’

‘I have got a parcel for your wife,’ he answered; ‘the postman left it this morning at our village and I brought it on; take it please, for I am in a hurry.’

He gave Manuel a little wooden box directed to Madame Jonquille Vincent. Manuel thought he knew the handwriting and examined it more carefully; surely all those flourishes reminded him of Constant Loison’s hand. Annoyed and surprised, he hastened into the yard; Jonquille was leaning out of her window with a dreamy look, but when she saw Manuel burst angrily into her room she trembled. He held the bunch of snowdrops in one hand and the box in the other, looking at it suspiciously, as if he thought it held dynamite.

‘What are you bringing me?’ she asked.

‘If you open the parcel you will no doubt find out,’ he answered roughly.

She looked at the address and untied the string.

‘How pretty!’ she cried, as she took off the lid of the box and saw a delicate bouquet of pale roses. ‘Who can have sent me that?’

She looked up at her husband and blushed as she saw signs of suspicion and anger on his face.

‘Can you really not guess who sent them?’ he said, making an effort to speak quietly.

‘Not the least bit in the world.’

‘Then why did you blush?’ he asked, while he involuntarily squeezed the poor snowdrops which he held.

‘I don’t know,’ she answered coldly; ‘I suppose because you looked so strangely at me.’

‘Ah, you women are cunning creatures!’ he exclaimed. ‘Would you like me to tell you who sent these roses?’

She only shrugged her shoulders. While Manuel was speaking his fingers were pulling the poor roses about and scattering their frail petals. She, woman-like, could not bear to see the flowers hurt—

‘Don’t spoil my roses!’ she cried at length.

Her husband looked at her.

‘Oh! you care about these roses, do you? I had brought you some flowers too; but you shall see now what I am going to do with them.’

He opened the window and threw the roses and snowdrops pell-mell into the river. Jonquille said nothing, but seeing that her husband

was thoroughly out of temper she got up to leave the room, but he locked the door and made his wife sit down again while he stood before her with his arms crossed, looking at her. She saw a convulsive movement in his throat as if he were trying to stifle an outburst of jealous rage ; his lips trembled, and his face was very pale.

‘Jonquille,’ he said at last in a deep voice which sounded like the rumbling of distant thunder, ‘tell me the truth. I can’t believe that any one would send a woman flowers like this, unless they were sure that she would guess whom they came from. There is no letter or card in the box ; the sender evidently thought that that was unnecessary, and that you would guess who the giver was. I recognised the handwriting, and I suppose you do too.’

‘No,’ she answered, glancing at the box.

He bent down to her and seized both her wrists.

‘Speak the truth,’ he said ; ‘if you have been giddy and imprudent I will forgive you. But you may remember that I warned you. I did not suppose that he was so complimentary and polite merely for my sake.’

‘Are you speaking of Constant Loison?’ she asked, throwing herself back in the chair.

Manuel laughed bitterly.

‘Did you not tell me yourself that he used to come and see you while I was away?’

She turned pale with indignation.

‘Is this the way you turn my own words against me, when I frankly told you of his coming? You may think what you like; I shall not trouble myself to defend my character to you?’

She ran towards the door, forgetting that her husband had locked it; then, turning back baffled, she went to the window and leant her head on her hands. Manuel stood silent, but the sight of the box roused his anger again. Yet perhaps Jonquille could explain matters, he thought, and he drew near her saying—

‘Jonquille.’ She made no answer. ‘Jonquille,’ he repeated, ‘don’t make me more angry. I wish to be calm; answer me now. Is this the first time that Constant Loison has paid you marked attention?’

He waited, but as she remained silent, with her head hidden in her hands, he went on—

‘You are but a child, Jonquille; perhaps you

were imprudent or too familiar, and he took advantage of it ; tell me what happened.'

Still no answer. He seized her roughly by the arm and obliged her to turn round and face him, but he could see no sign of shame or fear in her eyes.

'Will you answer me ?' he said, clenching his teeth.

She shook her head.

'You may think what you choose,' she said, with an accent of scorn.

She stood there, proud, erect, obstinate, braving his temper. He lost his self-control, a mist passed before his eyes, a burst of anger seemed to choke him, then he lifted his hand and struck Jonquille.

She staggered at the blow, not from its violence, but because it seemed to strike her to the heart. She uttered a loud cry which made Manuel tremble ; he saw his young wife lean quivering against the wall, with one hand stretched out as if to seek support ; but when he drew near she motioned him away, and he left the room.

The pangs of jealousy still troubled him, and wandering absently down to the river he jumped

into the boat which lay moored there, and rowed across to a wild spot, where he could remain unseen and unobserved. The thought of what he had done filled him with horror which almost overpowered his jealousy. Had he really struck his wife, or had he held his hand in time? Jonquille's cry answered him as it echoed in his ears. She had provoked him, true, but was this any excuse for his cowardice? And now, who would clear away his suspicions?

He started up at the thought of Constant Loison. Yes; he should answer him; he was a man, and could be compelled to speak. Without stopping to reflect Manuel walked quickly to the town, which he reached in three hours, only to find that Constant had left that morning on a journey in connection with his master's business, and he was not expected to return for several days.

He would have felt that he had had his revenge if he could have seen the expression of Manuel's face. Constant had not intended any particular harm in sending Jonquille the flowers; he thought they might come while her husband was away, in which case she would have time to invent a story about them; or if Manuel were there, he would learn that the owner of a pretty

wife must expect to have a little trouble about her admirers. Constant, with his want of imagination, had thought of no worse results of his little attention.

Manuel returned weary in body and full of troubled thoughts; he could not get rid of his suspicions. As he entered the house he saw Jonquille in the parlour, standing before an old cupboard which was rarely opened. As she turned her head he could see traces of tears on her cheeks. But what was she doing? She was holding up tiny clothes which had got yellow from lying by, while she fitted a small cap, bordered with lace, on her closed hand. 'What did all this mean?' thought Manuel, deeply moved as he sprang to his wife's side, and asked in a voice unlike his own—

'What are all these little things?'

Jonquille blushed.

'It means,' she said, closing the cupboard, 'that in striking your wife, you struck your child also.' Then she burst into tears and whispered, 'Poor little thing!' as she hid her face in her hands.

'And you never told me?' he said in a voice hardly audible.

‘I was going to tell you this morning just when you came in like a madman.’

Manuel turned away; his cup of bitterness was full. He spent the rest of the day wandering about in gloomy silence, disgusted with himself, with his life, and with the future before him which he painted in the darkest colours. He felt powerless against the force of his own stormy, undisciplined nature, which seemed destined to bring disaster on him. In the evening he went up to see Pierre.

‘Do you know what I did to your sister?’ he asked abruptly.

‘No.’

‘Why, I felt mad with anger, and struck her! She will never forgive me, and I can never forgive myself.’

Pierre listened with dismay.

‘Look at me,’ continued Manuel; ‘you won’t often see a more miserable wretch. It is my fate; I have a temper which will lead me a dog’s life.’

‘I am sure,’ said Pierre in a trembling voice, ‘that Jonquille has forgiven you already.’

Manuel shook his head.

‘They say that women forgive easily, but do

they forget? If I were to be a model husband from now to my dying day Jonquille would never forget that I raised my hand against her like a coward. Nothing I can do will ever blot that out. My happiness is at an end; I have done what can never be undone, Pierre; I would willingly sell myself for two sous, and then Jonquille would be rid of me. She would be happier without me.'

He walked up and down the room as he spoke, getting more and more excited. At last Pierre managed to calm him and said—

'There is nothing that cannot be mended. Cheer up, Manuel; God will help you in this trouble; doesn't He always help me, and why should He not help you too?'

'Ask Him,' said Manuel, 'for I do not know how to ask.'

The next day he was still gloomy but calmer; he spoke little, and Jonquille was touched by his sorrow, for Pierre had told her all that had happened in his room. In the evening, when her husband was preparing to start alone on an expedition, she went up to him timidly and, putting her hand on his shoulder, said—

'You don't really think that I allowed Con-

stant to make love to me? I never said a word to him nor had a thought about him which you might not have known.'

'Yes, I am sure of that; the moment you spoke about the child I knew it,' he answered slowly.

They were both silent, then he stooped and kissed her, saying—

'Go and take a rest, you must need it; the moon sets an hour after midnight; I shall not start till then. Say good-night to Pierre from me; or no, I will go and see him myself,' he added, and he went quietly upstairs into Pierre's room. The boy was in bed, but was still awake.

'Are you going alone to-night, Manuel?' he asked.

'Yes; the others have taken a holiday. But what does it matter? It is not the first time I have gone without them, and for a fellow like me, solitude is better than company. Good-night, my boy.'

'Good-night, Manuel; don't be imprudent.'

The smuggler shrugged his shoulders and left the room. When the time came to start he heard a soft step on the stairs and saw

Jonquille coming down, wrapped up in a large shawl.

‘I will row you across and bring the boat back,’ she said; ‘otherwise the current might carry it down, as it happened once before.’

‘Poor child!’ said Manuel tenderly; ‘I lead you a hard life; you have no rest by day or night.’

The only answer she gave was to lean her cheek against his shoulder.

They crossed the river together, and Manuel waited to see that his young wife reached the other side safely before he started on his way. The moon had set behind the trees, but the sky was still full of silvery light. Manuel, with his pack on his shoulders, chose one of the easier paths, for the ravine was too difficult a road to go alone. He plodded on slowly, as if the burden of his thoughts weighed him down. At the first turn in the path he stopped to look back. Below him was the deep gorge, full of darkness except for one tiny speck of trembling light, which looked as if a breath would blow it out. Manuel thought that this dark valley was like his own past life, and he asked himself whether the lamp of Jonquille’s

love would be able to live on or would be extinguished by his stormy passions?

‘When she has a little child, fair and smiling, on her knees,’ he said to himself, ‘she will no longer care for a jealous, violent man like myself. Poor child! what kind of father shall I be to him?’

Then he went on his way and did not stop till he reached the bend of the gorge, where he sat down to take breath, and began again to reflect on his past life. All at once his keen eyes saw shadows moving in the bushes, and he found out just in time that the path was watched. Ill-luck seemed to follow him that night, for the next outlet of the gorge which he tried was also guarded. The whole body of Custom-House men seemed to be on duty that night.

He wandered a long time under the trees, not daring to leave their sheltering gloom, but at last, when he was on the edge of the wood, two men saw him and ran after him. He was more active than they were and managed to escape, but found himself obliged to give up all idea of crossing the frontier that night.

‘I should lose my pack,’ thought Manuel: ‘I am unlucky to-night and no mistake.’

When day dawned he found himself, after

walking and hiding for five hours, by the river-side.

Jonquille was sleeping lightly—for a state of watchfulness is habitual to a smuggler's wife—when she was awoke suddenly from a painful dream by a call of 'Jonquille, Jonquille !'

She got up hastily and rushed to the window ; her husband was standing on the opposite shore, calling and making frantic signs to her. She dressed as quickly as possible and ran downstairs, unbolting the door gently for fear of waking Pierre. The cold morning air made her shiver.

'Be quick !' cried her husband ; 'they are coming.'

She looked up in terror and saw two men running down the bank ; and she could tell by their dress that they were Custom-House men. Without losing a moment she stepped into the boat and rowed with all her strength against the stream. The men were close to Manuel ; in half a minute they would seize him, and the boat had not quite reached the shore.

'Jump in, Manuel !' cried Jonquille, going to the end of the boat farthest from him that he might have room to jump.

He was standing on a rock, and active and fearless gave a leap just as one of the men was touching him; the boat swayed under his weight as he jumped in, the oar on which Jonquille was leaning gave way, and she lost her balance and fell with a loud cry into the river.

Manuel, pale with fear, threw off his coat and plunged at once into the water. He was no great swimmer, but he soon reappeared on the surface, holding Jonquille by the arm.

The current was strong, for the melting snow added to its force at this time of year, and it was almost impossible to struggle against it, especially at this point where it seemed to sweep along exultingly after leaping the dam. Manuel, Jonquille, and the boat drifted helplessly down the swift river, while the two Custom-House men on the shore tried in vain to give help.

Jonquille, who had never lost consciousness, clung to the boat and was upheld by Manuel, whose one thought was to save his wife; his own life was but little worth in comparison with hers.

All at once they were swept into a whirlpool, and the boat veering suddenly round, its sharp

prow struck Manuel on the temple, and he lost his grasp of his wife's arm, and sank with a groan.

Jonquille was conscious of nothing after this terrible blow, but a counter current drove the boat on shore while she still clung to it, and she was saved. One of the men stayed with her while the other ran down the bank to look for her husband's body; it was found at last, and when Jonquille recovered her consciousness, she was told that it was washed ashore in a little bay. It was the very spot where she had often sat and watched the stars reflected in the quiet water.

CHAPTER X

MANUEL VINCENT was dead. His end had been tragic and befitting his life, which, though seemingly commonplace, had been full of storm and passion. Yet a peaceful look lay on the marble-like features which had so often been convulsed by passion, and a smile seemed to hover about the lips, as if they had murmured the name of Jonquille before silence had sealed them for ever. He had redeemed his faults towards her in that one last act of self-devotion—he had given his life for her. Perhaps, in his dying moments, peace had for the first time visited his soul, and he bid adieu to life without a pang, being ready to say with the Apostle, ‘It is better for me to depart.’

Jonquille’s only consolation was to watch the mysterious calm expression of his face : she could not give ear to the words of friends, but,

sitting by the bed where Manuel lay, she looked at him with wide-open, tearless eyes, which gazed on death for the first time and found it a strange and unfathomable mystery. Did he not seem to lie there in all the vigour of youth, except for that awful pallor which showed that the young life and strength had passed away from the rigid form?

Jonquille sat outwardly calm as long as she was allowed to be alone by her dead husband, talking to him in low tones, as if he were still with her and could answer her.

‘How quiet you are. Are you indeed happier now? Ah, Manuel, Manuel! you never smiled so sweetly while you were by my side. I did not know how to make you happy.’

When they tried to lead her out of the room she refused to go, saying—

‘They will take him away soon enough; let me stay here.’ But when at last his comrades bore him to his grave, and she watched them go and felt she was indeed alone, her sorrow broke out, and kneeling by Pierre’s side, she bowed her head, and the deep waters of anguish overwhelmed her.

For days she could not utter a word or struggle against her grief; she could do nothing

but bend her head beneath the stroke and suffer.

‘Why was he taken? Why are the useless, helpless ones left?’ said Pierre in a low tone. ‘I ought to have been taken, and he should have been left.’

Jonquille heard him, and rousing herself suddenly from the torpor which had fallen on her, she threw both her arms round her brother’s neck, exclaiming—

‘Oh, don’t talk like that! Perhaps God may hear you and take you away from me too.’

Then she burst into tears and sobbed passionately till, exhausted with emotion, she fell asleep like a tired child.

Mother Salomé, in the meantime, went about the house, up and down, like a soul in purgatory. She had loved Manuel like a son; he was so brave and strong, and now she grieved for him as much as she could grieve for anything. She would handle almost tenderly the little presents he had given her, and would look half a dozen times a day at the fine brown cloth cloak he had given her, while she thought, ‘Yes, I was right to ask for it when I did; he won’t give me any more presents next winter, poor lad;’ and she

would wipe her eyes with her apron, and then do her best to console Jonquille, whom she treated more kindly than formerly. One day she said to her—

‘We have had a great loss, my poor girl; it breaks my heart to see you there in your widow’s dress; but your husband, you see, was one of those unlucky men who are never satisfied; he was neither good enough nor bad enough to get on in this world; he was always wanting something, or regretting something, instead of making the best of things; and he was getting gloomy, and would have taken to drink, I am afraid.’

Jonquille trembled, and got up and went away. This thought had already come into her mind, but she would not harbour it; it seemed like treachery to Manuel’s memory. Her dead husband, who had given his life for her, was far dearer to her now than he had ever been before.

‘I do hope my child will be a boy,’ she thought, as she stitched away at all the little garments she was preparing.

Her wish was granted, and six months later Mother Salomé held in her arms a fine boy, whom she swaddled up with trembling fingers.

‘He has his father’s eyes,’ she said, as she

held him up to Jonquille, whose cheeks were wet with tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

The smugglers came to pay their respects as soon as they were allowed, and each one wanted to stand godfather to Manuel's boy.

'No,' said Jonquille, shaking her head; 'we must go our different ways now. My mother and I have agreed to give up our old life; she is getting on in years and is weary of it. We shall sell the old house and settle somewhere else. We three can live on little. We shall try to have a garden, and a woman can generally get some work to do at home. I shall learn to iron fine linen.'

Firmin Mitou was against this.

'It won't do, Jonquille; you can't do that sort of work.'

'I am changed,' she answered, with such a sad smile that Firmin was obliged to turn his head away to hide his emotion.

'I don't know what will become of all of us; we were so accustomed to this old place; and now we must look for another rendezvous,' he said.

'Unless one of us buys it. Constant Loison would be rich enough to do that,' said Arsène.

Jonquille made a gesture of strong disapproval, and exclaimed—

‘He shall not have it if he paid ever so much for it. It was he who made us have a quarrel the day before—the day before——’

She could say no more, but only pressed her child closer to her. She was sitting by the window in her black dress, with her pretty head slightly bent as if under the weight of sorrow; a calmer, graver beauty seemed now to be hers as she sat with her child on her knees in the new dignity of a mother. The child opened its eyes and she bent over it. Ah! those were indeed Manuel’s eyes; and she, who had been struck down by his loss, felt that her interest in life was waking up with the advent of this new little life which was opening like a bud in the midst of winter.

Firmin, with his rough fingers, gently stroked the innocent little face which peered out of the cap border.

‘I see,’ he said, addressing the unconscious infant in a low voice,—‘I see by your mother’s look that *you* will never be a smuggler. Perhaps she is right; as for us, we are in the mud and must stick in it. I think I should like to do as

Manuel did, if you will forgive my saying so, Madame Jonquille, and start on my own account. If we all do that, Constant Loison will be puzzled how to manage ;' and he stroked his beard, as if he were pleased at having had such a good idea, and then went on : ' You see, it is all we are good for ; we know the business, and the business knows us. Sometimes we have misfortunes ; but who can foretell ? Come, Jonquille, wish me good luck. So you will never row us across the stream again ?'

At these words Jonquille grew red, and her eyes filled with tears as she remembered the days that were no more. She rose, with her child in her arms, and sat down close by Pierre, who always understood her better than any one else. He took hold of his sister's hand with his thin fingers, which seemed to have grown more frail than ever.

' We two together,' she said to him, ' will bring up my little boy, and, with God's help, he shall have a happier life than his father.'

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